

# JUDAISM

## THREE APPROACHES TO RELIGION

MILTON STEINBERG—Simon Noveck

BUBER and SOLOVEITCHIK—Ruth Birnbaum

## JEWS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

PHILIP ROTH—Joel Grossman

BERNARD MALAMUD—David R. Mesher

## ANTI-SEMITISM—A JEWISH PROBLEM

Berel Lang

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JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

The Board of Editors, composed of distinguished scholars and thinkers drawn from every segment of Jewish life, is vested with full authority and responsibility for the contents of this Journal. Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the American Jewish Congress, which is sponsoring the publication of this Journal as a service to the American Jewish community and to all who seek to understand the nature of the Jewish tradition and its modern significance.

*American Jewish Congress*

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# JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

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## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a worldview on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

*Judaism* will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.

# JUDAISM'S *Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*

Happy Anniversary—to us!

It was not until the Fall 1976 issue of JUDAISM went to press that we noticed that it was No. 100. Thus, it marked twenty-five years of uninterrupted publication of this journal. In all modesty we believe it is an occasion for thanksgiving that far transcends the circle of our Editors, contributors and readers, and deserves to be noted by all American Jewry.

A quarter of a century ago, the Editor persuaded the leadership of American Jewish Congress that its commitment to meaningful Jewish living would be enhanced by the establishment of a non-partisan, non-denominational journal dedicated to Jewish philosophy, religion and ethics. At that time, there was no periodical of similar scope and character anywhere in the world. In the intervening twenty-five years, some excellent journals have made their appearance, but they tend to reflect one particular viewpoint or to deal with the tradition of Judaism only peripherally among their other concerns.

The need for JUDAISM existed in 1951; it exists in even greater measure today. The intervening years have witnessed a resurgence of interest in Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics among a growing sector of Jewish youth and their elders. It is reflected in the large number of new writers, scholars and thinkers whose work has appeared in these pages.

For all these blessings of the spirit we offer thanks to God *shehehyanu vekiymanu vehiggiyanu lazeman hazeh!*

R.G.

R.W.

The American Jewish Congress will mark this milestone in the history of JUDAISM with a Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Luncheon, to be held at Congress House, 15 East 84th St., New York City, on Sunday, February 27, 1977, at 1:00 P.M. Readers and other friends of JUDAISM will be very welcome.

Reservations, at \$7.50, may be made by calling 879-4500, Ext. 850.

## *The First Reader*

### *Why They Don't Understand Each Other*

The contemporary novelist, Philip Roth, has created an extensive gallery of characters of men and women in his writings. By and large, his women tend to be non-Jews and his men Jews. *Joel Grossman* suggests, in “‘Happy As Kings’: Philip Roth’s Men and Women,” that each group uses a different language, the result of its varying cultural background.

### *Jewishness is of the Essence*

Bernard Malamud is one of the most distinguished American-Jewish writers in our time. Some critics have maintained that Jewishness plays no significant role either in his thought or in his craft. In a careful analysis, entitled “Malamud’s Jewish Metaphors,” *David R. Mesher* is able to demonstrate the significance of Jewishness in Malamud’s writing and a definite development in the writer’s conception of the meaning of Jewishness.

### *More Thoughts on God and the Holocaust*

The concern of thinkers with the role of God during the horrors of the Nazi campaign of genocide, and its implications for religious faith, continues to grow in extent. In his paper, “God and The Holocaust,” *Elliot N. Dorff* contributes to this ongoing discussion.

### *Milton Steinberg: After Twenty-Five Years*

More than a quarter of a century has elapsed since the untimely death of Milton Steinberg, probably the most brilliant religious thinker in the American rabbinate of his day, as well as a superb lecturer, preacher and counsellor to his fellow Jews.

In his paper, “Milton Steinberg’s Philosophy of Religion,” *Simon Noveck* presents Steinberg’s basic views on the role of reason, its relationship to faith, the nature of the universe, the concept of God, and the character of man. It is true that our age frequently scorns reason and denigrates history, but the fashion may be changing. In any event, Steinberg’s lucidity and integrity of mind and spirit have much to offer the contemporary seeker after a viable philosophy of life.

### *The Primary Importance of Hebrew*

In many circles today, there is a praiseworthy desire to transmit the content of the Jewish tradition and not merely its externals. Unfortunately, this laudable goal has compelled some rabbis, educators and laymen to downgrade the importance of the Hebrew language in Jewish education. *Max Zeldner* argues that the elimination or even the diminution

of the role of Hebrew would be a tragic mistake. His thesis is summarized in the title of his paper, "Hebrew Is A Must In Jewish Education."

### *A Divergent Pair of Religious Figures*

The infinite variety of religious experience and the fecundity of religious thought in twentieth century Judaism are attested by the considerable number of men of genius and talent who have arisen to expound their vision. Two highly dissimilar figures who, nevertheless, draw upon the same source are Martin Buber and Joseph B. Soloveitchik. *Ruth Birnbaum* analyzes both of these two spiritual mentors of our age in "The Man of Dialogue and the Man of Halakhah."

### *The Openness of Judaism*

Since it has been the destiny of the Jewish people from the days of Abraham to our own to be a tiny minority within—and often opposed to—a powerful majority, the problem of the relationship of Judaism to the dominant culture and religion of every age has persisted through the centuries. In his paper, "Religious Witness in Judaism," *Ben Zion Bokser* discusses the question, "Should Judaism encourage converts to join its ranks?" In an open society, with traffic both out of the Jewish community and into it, the subject has considerable importance.

### *Anti-Semitism Should Concern Us*

No judgment on anti-Semitism is more widespread than the view that "anti-Semitism is not a Jewish question; it is a Christian problem." Students of the subject from radically different perspectives are nearly all agreed that the causes of anti-Semitism, as distinct from the assigned reasons, are to be found not in the Jew but in the world about him.

In his paper, "Anti-Semitism—A Jewish Question," *Berel Lang* challenges this assumption. He argues that to assume in advance that there is nothing in the Jew which arouses anti-Semitism is to beg the question and effectively to foreclose the possibility of a complete analysis of the origin and nature of this massive malady of mankind.

### *One of Israel's Founding Fathers*

As the State of Israel approaches the completion of its third decade, its principal early architects inevitably recede in consciousness and the struggles and achievements of yesterday become raw material for history text books. The fact is, however, that most of the problems and approaches of the past are still relevant today. In his paper, "Weizmann and Weizmannism," *Evyatar Friesel* discusses the achievement of the great Zionist leader who was the first President of the State of Israel.

### *Jeremiah's Answer to an Ongoing Problem*

The old French Proverb, *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*, "The more things change the more they remain the same," though quoted to death, remains true, nevertheless. No problem in contemporary Jewish life is more widely discussed than the relationship of Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

The problem, however, is not exactly new. It confronted the Prophet Jeremiah, who lived during the closing days of the First Temple shortly before the destruction of the Jewish State and the beginning of the Babylonian Exile. In "Jeremiah's Epistle to the Exiles and The Field in Anathoth," *Naphtali J. Rubinger* gives us a careful historical study of Jeremiah's purchase of a field during the last agonizing days before the destruction of Jerusalem and brings to life the dilemma which confronted the Prophet then and faces his descendants today.

### *The Sanctification of the Physical*

In the classic tradition of Judaism at its best, the physical is not regarded as inimical to the spiritual. "Honor Him with food and drink," a famous rabbinic passage counsels. In his paper, "The Human Meal," *Joel Wolowelsky* indicates how Judaism spiritualized the physical necessity for absorbing food and made of it a religious experience.

### *I Will Lift Mine Eyes*

Mountains have always loomed large in Jewish consciousness. In fact, one might suggest that Mount Sinai and Mount Zion represent the two poles of Jewish concern, for they represent both memory and aspiration, embodied in the two uniquely Hebraic phenomena of history and prophecy. In his paper, "The Mountains and Mount Zion," *Robert L. Cohn* explores the role of mountains in Judaism, with particular reference to Mount Zion.

### *Jews as Law-abiding Citizens*

Even before the destruction of the Temple and the end of Jewish independence and autonomy in the land of Israel, Jews found themselves living in a Diaspora. As a result, they were confronted by the necessity of harmonizing the prescriptions of Jewish religious law and the demands made upon them by the foreign governments to which they were subject. The third century sage, Samuel, who was one of the principal architects of the Babylonian Talmud, articulated the principle *dina d'malkhuta dina*, "The law of the land is law." The applications and limitations of this principle are examined by *Salomon Faber* in his review-essay, which deals both with the concept and with a recent Israeli work on the subject.

R.G.



# ***“Happy as Kings”: Philip Roth’s Men and Women***

JOEL GROSSMAN

EARLY IN *LETTING GO* PHILIP ROTH’S somewhat petulant narrator, Gabe Wallach, is at his most petulant as he announces, “We come now to an interlude about which there is not too much to be explained. The girl’s name was Marjorie Howells and she was in revolt against Kenosha, Wisconsin.”<sup>1</sup> Wallach goes on to describe his brief, meaningless affair with Marjorie, which culminated in her request to live in his apartment. The moment after she suggests that she “really stay” with Gabe, this exchange takes place:

“Marge we hardly know each other.”  
“We can be happy as kings.”

Wallach makes no comment on the simile, but Peter Tarnopol, the frantic narrator of Roth’s most recent novel, *My Life as a Man*, hears the same line and reacts more strongly. His wife-to-be has just tricked him into a marriage proposal that she had every reason to believe was profoundly insincere, yet she responds to the offer by “erupting”: “Oh darling we’ll be happy as kings!”<sup>2</sup> Tarnopol comments: “That was the word—‘kings,’ plural—uttered wholly ingenuously. I don’t think she was lying this time. She believed that to be so. We would be happy as kings.”

These two isolated moments, contained in novels that are separated by twelve years, one from what might be called Roth’s “apprenticeship” and one from his “maturity,” are both marked by what may be the central characteristics of Roth’s male/female encounters: the man is Jewish, the woman is not; the man and woman are using each other, imposing on each other fictive roles which they have created for one another; the man is doing what he thinks he ought to do rather than what he wants to do; and, finally, the man and woman are speaking in different languages, and neither has any idea what the other is saying. This last point needs perhaps the most elaboration and it is here that I will begin.

In Ingmar Bergman’s film, *Scenes From a Marriage*, the seemingly “perfect” couple, Johan and Marianne, entertain a couple obviously at

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1. Philip Roth, *Letting Go* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 28.

2. Philip Roth, *My Life as a Man* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), p. 197.

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JOEL GROSSMAN is a first-year student at UCLA School of Law.

war—Katarina and Peter. After the combatants leave, Marianne (who is a divorce lawyer) and Johan discuss their friends' marriage:

MARIANNE: I know why Katarina and Peter go through such hell.

JOHAN: Oh?

MARIANNE: They don't speak the same language. They must translate into a third language they both understand in order to get each other's meaning. . . . We speak the same language. That's why we have such a good relationship. . . . I'm always coming across it in my work. Sometimes it's as if husband and wife were making a long-distance call to one another on faulty telephones. Sometimes it's like hearing two tape recorders with preset programs. And sometimes it's the great silence of outer space. I don't know which is most horrible.<sup>3</sup>

As Bergman's story unfolds, the words become hauntingly ironic, for they accurately describe Johan and Marianne's own problems. It is clear that Roth's men and women speak into the same faulty telephones as do Marianne's clients. They continually astound each other with language that serves to drive them farther apart rather than draw them together. Marjorie Howells' and Maureen Johnson's (the future Mrs. Tarnopol) expressions of optimism confirm their men's suspicions that a relationship is hopeless. Peter Tarnopol tells us, in the paragraph following the lines quoted above, "She threw her arms around me, as happy as I had ever seen her—and for the first time I realized that she *was* truly mad." (Emphasis Roth's.) In case we haven't gotten the point, Tarnopol goes on:

"Oh, I always knew it," she said joyously.

"Knew what?"

"That you loved me. That you couldn't hold out forever against that kind of love. Not even you."

She was crazy.

Maureen may well be crazy, but more to the point is the fact that she and Peter have no way of communicating. Even a third language, into which Marianne's clients translate their dialogue, seems out of the question for Roth's characters. So far apart are they that what is needed is not a neutral language, but a neutral reality, for the realities in which Peter and Maureen live seem mutually exclusive.

Another case: Alexander Portnoy recalls for his psychiatrist an episode from his younger, saner dealings with women. Alex and his Gentile girl friend, Kay, are juniors in college, and when it seems that Kay is pregnant they decide to marry. Alex asks her, "And you'll convert, right?" It was the wrong question, as he explains:

I intended the question to be received as ironic, or thought I had. But Kay took it seriously. Not solemnly, mind you, just seriously.

Kay Campbell, Davenport, Iowa: "Why would I want to do a thing like that?"<sup>4</sup>

3. Ingmar Bergman, *Scenes From a Marriage* (New York: Bantam, 1974), p. 26.

4. Philip Roth, *Portnoy's Complaint* (New York: Random House, 1969), p. 230.

It turns out that Kay's response antagonizes Alex to the point where he breaks off their relationship. To be sure, Alex is as surprised at her reaction as Kay is. "How could I be feeling a wound," he muses, "in a place in which I was not even vulnerable." At the root of the problem, though, is not Alex's surprising spate of Jewish pride; the crucial thing he learns here is that Kay cannot understand him. His irony is taken seriously, and her ingenuousness is taken as thinly-veiled anti-Semitism. English, the language that they thought was mutual, fails them.

That Alexander Portnoy, Peter Tarnopol, Gabe Wallach are Jewish, and that the women they involve themselves with are Gentile, is at the center of this inability to communicate. To be sure, men and women of the same religion can and do experience this difficulty—Neil Klugman and Brenda Patimkin of *Goodbye, Columbus* and Roy and Lucy Bassart of *When She Was Good* are certainly proof. But there is a special way in which this general disease becomes localized in the case of Jewish-Gentile relationships, and it is with this particular strain of the virus that Roth most often concerns himself. "Jewish men and their Gentile women," Roth told an interviewer, was one of the ideas behind *Portnoy's Complaint*.<sup>5</sup> One more case of star-crossed lovers fighting their communities' prejudices.

But when the Othello is named Cohen and the Desdemona is Johnson, something important is going on that is particularly pertinent to the present moment in American literature. These Jewish men and non-Jewish women battling each other on the pages of the most widely read contemporary fiction are clearly emblematic of an important American phenomenon, and it is Roth, I think, who best understands this phenomenon and seeks to interpret it to the world. In one of the most telling moments of *My Life as a Man*, Peter Tarnopol's brother, Morris, returns a short story to Peter that Morris sees as a fictionalized account of his brother's unhappy marriage. Morris comments:

What is it with you Jewish writers? Madeleine Herzog, Deborah Rojack, the cutie-pie castrator in *After the Fall*, and isn't the desirable *shiksa* of *A New Life* a kvetch and titless in the bargain? And now, for the further delight of the rabbis and the reading public, Lydia Zuckerman, that Gentile tomato. Chicken soup in every pot and a Grushenka in every garage. With all the Dark Ladies to choose from, you luftmenschen can really pick 'em.<sup>6</sup>

When people of differing backgrounds meet, and each has a set of assumptions of what the other must be like, it is clear that a meaningful relationship can never be established until the stereotyped barriers to communication are broken down. Often, this does not happen. Philip Roth's Jewish men are obsessed with a mythical creature called *shiksa* and her promise of hitherto unimagined sexual delights. At the same time, but to a greater or lesser degree, his non-Jewish women are filled with ideas

5. Philip Roth, *Reading Myself and Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975), p. 16.

6. *My Life*, p. 118.

about Jewish men. These feelings, in turn, are connected, clearly, to Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles in general, to men's attitudes toward women in general and so on. When all of these assumptions, prejudices and fantasies converge, the result can be something like this:

. . . after a while she was looking across at me with flames flashing in her eyes, and asking me how it felt to be a Jew in America. I asked her how it felt to be a Protestant in America—and she told me. It was very dry, and very typical. Jews, she explained, were different. Marge's father, a white-haired investor in Chicago, of whom she showed me a rather intimidating photograph . . . thought Jews were different too, but Margie thought they were different from the way her father thought they were different.<sup>7</sup>

Margie's main interest in Gabe, it would seem, lies in shocking her father with the news that her new boyfriend is, of all things, a Jew.

As for Gabe's main interest in Margie, perhaps his co-religionist, Alex Portnoy, can provide some clue:

Look, I'm not asking for the world—I just don't see why I should get any less out of life than some schmuck like Oogie Pringle or Henry Aldrich. I want Jane Powell too, God damn it! And Corliss and Veronica. I too want to be the boy friend of Debbie Reynolds—it's the Eddie Fisher in me coming out, that's all, the longing in all us swarthy Jewboys for those bland blond exotics called *shiksas*.

Portnoy goes on to tell his doctor that what he's learned about *shiksas* is that they too want what's exotic, that, "as far as a certain school of *shiksa* is concerned . . . this knight turns out to be none other than a brainy, balding, beaky Jew . . ."<sup>8</sup> Portnoy's discovery is nothing new, but Roth's, I think, is: at the heart of the problem between his men and women is the odd combination of a man who stereotypes others and deeply resents being stereotyped himself. As we shall see, these prejudices become more, not less, deeply felt as relationships develop. Of all of Roth's couples, it is the married ones who are least able to separate mate from myth.

In a telling moment in Cynthia Ozick's short story, "The Pagan Rabbi," a character (Jewish) who has been married to a Gentile is asked by another character (also Jewish) "What are they like, those people?"<sup>9</sup> "Those people"—as if one representative of the 99% of the world's population who happen not to be Jewish were a broad enough sample on which to base generalizations. Philip Roth's men and women, so well-educated and so sophisticated, seem far-removed from this type of silly type-casting. It must come as no small surprise to them (if, indeed, it comes at all) that the reprehensible prejudices of their parents are not dead, but metamorphosed. It is strange to note that while Philip Roth has repeatedly been attacked by rabbis and other Jewish spokesmen for his

7. *Letting Go*, p. 27.

8. *Portnoy's Complaint*, p. 153.

9. Cynthia Ozick, *The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories* (New York: Knopf, 1971), p. 10.

characters' (and his own) "self-hatred," his critics have little to say about the offensive strain of "anti-Gentilism" exhibited, not only overtly by characters like Sophie Portnoy and Morris Tarnopol, but latently by almost all of the other Jewish characters. It is a topic about which more needs to be said.

The connection between people who see others as types rather than as individuals, and people who use others selfishly, should by now be evident. Gabe Wallach's opening words about Marjorie Howells are again relevant: "The girl's name was Marjorie Howells and she was in revolt against Kenosha, Wisconsin." Clearly, Gabe is being used, and he is not the first Roth hero to be thus employed. At the end of *Goodbye, Columbus*, Neil Klugman, the protagonist, finds himself in the same position. His summer girl friend, Brenda Patimkin, has precipitated their break-up by "accidentally" leaving her diaphragm at home where her mother was sure to find it. Neil, after coming to visit Brenda in Boston for the Jewish New Year, realizes that Brenda has left the incriminating contraceptive at home on purpose, knowing that her parents would act as they did, and that she would be forced to tell Neil that she couldn't continue the relationship. They argue briefly, he leaves and, as the narrator tells us, the affair is over.

What are we to make of Brenda's oversight? When Neil points out to her how simple it would have been to take the diaphragm to Boston she counters, "You keep making it seem as though I *wanted* her to find it. Do you think I need this? Do you? I can't even go home any more."<sup>10</sup> But, as Neil is quick to point out, she can and will go home again, welcomed by her father with "two coats and a half-dozen dresses." She has treated him shabbily, as a weapon in her never-ending catfight with her mother.

Brenda's flaunting her promiscuity in her mother's own home is reminiscent of a scene in a novel published only a few months before *Goodbye, Columbus*—Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*. Henderson's future wife, Lily, seduces him in her mother's home while her mother is out playing cards. When she and Henderson arrive at the house, Lily calls her mother to tell her not to come home. Lily is well aware that as soon as her mother is told to stay away she will rush right home, as she does. It is Lily's way of hurting her mother, but it is Henderson who must face the woman who is waiting in the living room when he descends from Lily's bedroom. Henderson, it turns out, is more forgiving than Neil Klugman and eventually he marries Lily.

This difference between the two heroes may have to do with what Philip Roth sees as the essential disparity between the Jewish and the non-Jewish characters whom Jewish writers invent. In his important essay, "Imagining Jews," published in the *New York Review of Books* in September, 1974, Roth argues that until his own Portnoy arrived in 1969,

10. Philip Roth, *Goodbye, Columbus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 94.

Jewish writers clearly distinguished between Jewish and Gentile characters. Speaking of Saul Bellow he writes,

Almost invariably his heroes are Jewish in vivid and emphatic ways when they are actors in dramas of conscience where matters of principle or virtue are at issue, but are by comparison only faintly marked by their Jewishness. if they are Jews at all, when appetite and quasi- or outright libidinous adventure is at the heart of a novel.<sup>11</sup>

He goes on to say that Bellow had to imagine Henderson a Gentile, for no Jew could be so completely immersed in the search for satisfaction, in assuaging the voice of the id crying "I want." Roth is guilty, I think, of oversimplifying the case, and he is surely wrong in his reading of Eugene Henderson's "I want." For our purposes, it is sufficient to note at this point that part of what Roth was trying to do in *Portnoy's Complaint* was to correct the imbalance that he saw in the presentation of Jewish characters. As he notes earlier in that essay,

Going wild in public is the last thing in the world that a Jew is expected to do—by himself, by his family, by his fellow Jews, and by the larger community of Christians whose tolerance for him is often tenuous to begin with. . .<sup>12</sup>

Going wild in public, or thinking about going wild in public, has actually been one of Roth's subjects all along. To return to the ending of *Goodbye, Columbus*: there is a sentence in the last paragraph that is emblematic of the Rothian hero's fear of public self-indulgence. Neil Klugman has just left the hotel room that he was to share with Brenda and is standing in Harvard Yard trying "to think of nothing." He is staring at a glass building when, he tells us, "Suddenly, I wanted to set down my suitcase and pick up a rock and heave it right through the glass, but of course I didn't." The punctuation here is crucial. Only a comma separates the words "glass" and "but"; not even a semi-colon, let alone a period. How brief the pause that a comma allows the reader, for how instantaneous is the "no" delivered to the brain that is told "I want."

Neil Klugman's decision not to smash the window surprises neither the character nor the reader. Klugman's "of course" comes as a kind of confirmation for both him and the reader that nice, well-mannered Jewish men don't "go wild in public." In the essay I have already quoted from, "Imagining Jews," Roth supposes that the dramatic reaction to *Portnoy's Complaint* came because readers of Jewish novels had been accustomed to the central difference between Jewish and Gentile characters: Jews controlled their impulses, Gentiles didn't. When the public was confronted by a Jew "going wild," the public itself went on a wild buying

11. *Reading*, p. 224.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 222.

spree, making Roth rich and famous for all the wrong reasons. What Roth does not say in that essay, though, is that he himself helped to create these expectations in his audience. In fact, the gap between how his characters act and how they want to act has been his theme all along. Neil Klugman's off-handed dismissal of a momentary desire may be, in fact, the most symbolic moment of the novella.

And not only of that novella. For Philip Roth may well be, as one looks over his works, the inventor of the Jewish novel of manners. Like Henry James, Roth concerns himself with what Lionel Trilling calls "that part of a culture which is made up of half-uttered or unutterable expressions of value." In his essay, "Manners, Morals and the Novel," Trilling goes on to say manners are "the things that for good or bad draw the people of a culture together and that separate them from the people of another culture." It is in this way that Roth can be seen as a "Jewish" novelist—he sets out to define what the manners of American Jews are; not what they believe, but how they act. "Manners," says Trilling, "make part of a culture which is not art, or religion, or morals, or politics, and yet it relates to all these highly formulated departments of culture."<sup>13</sup> If Trilling was correct in 1947 when he asserted that the novel of manners had "never really established itself in America," then this may be the great contribution of the Jewish novelists as a group and of Roth specifically; their close analysis of "manners as the indication of the direction of man's soul" may, in the end, serve to tell us not only what Jews in America were like at a specific moment, but, also, what the culture they separated themselves from was like.

To compare Roth's work to James' is only to pick up the hints that Roth leaves for us in more than one place. *Letting Go* opens with a conversation between Gabe Wallach and Libby Herz about *Portrait of a Lady*. The scene is a rich one, Roth along with his characters interpreting James. As they discuss Isabel Archer's passion for rugs, and the possible psychological conclusions to be drawn from it, it becomes clear to the reader that the same kind of moral implications are attached to the little manners that govern their interactions. The question at hand is privacy: Gabe, it seems, has left a deeply personal letter, written to him by his mother, inside a copy of *Portrait of a Lady* which he lent to Paul and Libby. By reading the letter, Libby violated a social manner that Gabe believed in. Together, they explore the moral consequences of this violation, seemingly unaware of the irony involved in their literary analysis of manners in James's story. Roth, however, along with the reader, is deeply aware of the irony, and he plays the little joke up to the hilt. Gabe grows angry with Libby, telling the reader, "I could not help but feel she was behaving terribly." In the ensuing conversation he tells her, "You're too

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13. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor, 1950), p. 200.



harsh with Isabel Archer. . . . Why don't you wait until you read it all."<sup>14</sup> As the reader will come to know, Gabe is being too harsh with Libby Herz; lest the reader make the same mistake, he is warned "read it all" before judging Libby.

Gabe's next comment about James' heroine will be understood in all its dimensions only by the reader who is hearing it for the second time. "She shows herself to have a lot of guts in the end," Gabe says of Isabel Archer. "It's one thing marrying the wrong person for the wrong reasons; it's another sticking it out with them." Gabe's narration continues with this reflection: "perhaps she realized that I was not talking only about the book." Gabe meant that he was talking about his parents' marriage, which Libby had become acquainted with through the letter. But Gabe's comment is doubly ironic, for the description of Isabel's courage applies still more directly to Libby's and Paul's marriage. Surely it is true, as the reader soon learns, that Paul and Libby were wrong for each other, that they had married for the "wrong reasons." Yet Libby sticks it out and, by the novel's conclusion, Gabe deeply admires her.

In Roth's novels of manners, as I have suggested, the most difficult problems facing his heroes are the conflicts between what they want to do and what they have come to believe they ought to do. His fiction might be called deeply self-reflexive, with literature itself becoming an active force in the minds of his characters. In the scene that I have just discussed Roth's self-reflexiveness takes the form of irony, as Gabe and Libby become fictional footnotes to the study of still another fictional character that Roth obviously feels will be remembered long after his are forgotten. It is a kind of novelistic literary criticism and it is, I think, very effective.

There is another kind of self-reflexive fiction which has given birth to so many novels that it might even be thought of as a sub-genre: the novel about a novelist trying to write a novel. *My Life as a Man* is a new twist on this theme. It contains two stories supposedly written by Peter Tarnopol; the troubled narrator who is trying to write a novel about his terrible marriage. At a crucial moment in the novel, Tarnopol, trying to decide what to do about the pregnancy of a woman whom he does not want to marry, reflects on his own moral sensibility and its relationship to the books that he has read. It is, I think, one of the most important paragraphs in all of Roth's fiction, and worth quoting at length:

It seemed then that I was making one of those moral decisions that I had heard so much about in college literature courses. But how different it all had been up in the Ivy League, when it was happening to Lord Jim and Kate Croy and Ivan Karamazov instead of me. Oh, what an authority on dilemmas I had been in the senior honors seminar! Perhaps if I had not fallen so in love with these complicated fictions of moral anguish, I never would have taken that long anguished walk to the upper West Side and back, and arrived at what seemed to me the only "honorable" decision for a young

14. *Letting Go*, p. 11.



man as morally "serious" as myself. But then I do not mean to attribute my ignorance to my teachers, or my delusions to books. Teachers and books are still the best thing that ever happened to me, and probably had I not been so grandiose about my honor, my integrity and my manly duty, about "morality itself," I would never have been so susceptible to a literary education, and its attendant pleasures to begin with. Nor would I have embarked on a literary career. And it's too late now to say that I shouldn't have, that by becoming a writer I only exacerbated my debilitating obsession. Literature got me into this and literature is gonna have to get me out. My writing is all I've got now, and though it happens not to have made life easy for me either in the years since my auspicious debut, it is really all I trust.<sup>15</sup>

Roth's insight here is acute. For the "morally serious" man committed to doing "the right thing" (of which the Jew is surely a type, if not a prototype), literature encompasses all of those things that Trilling would have us think of as "manners." The novel of manners for the American Jewish intellectuals who are Roth's characters must begin, then, with an acknowledgment of what these people have read. Paul and Libby Herz and Gabe Wallach share a copy of *Portrait of a Lady*; Alexander Portnoy recites Yeats to his illiterate lover; Peter Tarnopol tells us he was "stuffed to the gills with great fiction—"; Neil Klugman, to belabor the point, is a librarian and, as the novella ends, on the first day of the Jewish New Year, he goes not to synagogue but to the library.

If Peter Tarnopol is correct when he tells us that he would not have acted as he did (marrying Maureen) had he not "fallen so in love with these complicated fictions of moral anguish," then his story becomes a kind of *Madame Bovary* in reverse; she acts foolishly and romantically, paying the price of too much bad reading, while Tarnopol acts seriously and foolishly, the victim of too many good books. Philip Roth introduces his recent collection of essays by saying, "Together these pieces reveal to me a continuing preoccupation with the relationship between the written and the unwritten world."<sup>16</sup> If this is true of his essays, it is equally true of his fiction. People in his stories frequently see their situations as comparable to those of characters whom they have come to admire in books, and they try to act the way those characters might. As the narrator of one of Tarnopol's "Useful Fictions" tells us, "It seems either that literature too strongly influences my ideas about life, or that I am able to make no connection at all between its wisdom and my existence. . . . Only I am not a character in a book . . . I am real."<sup>17</sup> Spoken, remember, by Nathan Zuckerman, a fictional character created by Peter Tarnopol, a fictional character created by Philip Roth.

All of this confusion about who is real and who is a fictional character brings us back to the central issue of men and women and the enormous difficulties that they seem to have getting along in Roth's books. For if his

15. *My Life*, p. 195.

16. *Reading*, p. xi.

17. *My Life*, p. 86.

men, typified by Nathan Zuckerman (admittedly one of Tarnopol's characters, not Roth's) have trouble distinguishing between the events of their lives and events in novels, if they must remind themselves that they are not fictional characters but "real" people, then how much more difficult is it for them to distinguish between their literary ideas of women and the real women whom they meet? Alexander Portnoy correctly identifies part of his problem as the obsession that Jewish men have with a mythic creature called *shiksa*. Of his cousin Heshie's girl friend he exclaims, "Oh Jesus, 'Legs' Dembosky, in all her dumb, blond *goyische* beauty! Another icon!"<sup>18</sup> True enough. Yet there is another kind of icon worshipped by Roth's men who are more sophisticated than cousin Heshie, and for the Gabe Wallachs and Peter Tarnopols of his fiction Legs Dembosky may well be replaced by Isabel Archer.

The only problem with acting as though life were a book, of course, is that it isn't, and the only problem with seeing people as fictional characters is that they aren't. The former—life as a book—is a kind of prison, limiting as it does a character's options and forcing him to act within a small, circumscribed code of "moral" behavior, the books he has read serving as the prison walls. Roth symbolized this state in his first long story, portraying Neil Klugman "imprisoned" in a library.

The latter—forcing people into fictional roles that you have created for them out of the books you have read—can be far more dangerous. I choose as an illustration a scene from a writer with whom Roth ought to be compared more often—Mark Twain. Near the end of *Huckleberry Finn*, Nigger Jim is being held in a shed on Tom Sawyer's aunt's farm. Though it would be easy for Tom and Huck to free Jim by simply breaking into the shed, Tom insists that they carry out a complicated and maddeningly (for the reader as well as for Huck) detailed scheme borrowed from, among others, *The Count of Monte Cristo*. The escape goes on and on, wearing down the reader and driving poor Jim to distraction. The point is that Tom, in insisting on carrying out the affair the way they do it in the books that he has read, is imposing a terribly unfair confinement on Jim. It is also important to remember that Jim has not read the same books that Tom has, and does not understand Tom's actions or motives.

In much the same way, men and women in the fiction of Philip Roth imprison each other by refusing to acknowledge each other's freedom to be individuals. Like Tom Sawyer, they are imposing an imprisonment far worse than the confinement that they think they are liberating each other from. The metaphor of imprisonment and liberation cannot be overstated, for it is at the center of every important relationship in Roth's fiction. His characters do harm enough when they try to free themselves; when they seek to liberate each other the results are catastrophic.

Any solutions? Perhaps the way out of this disastrous cycle of mutual incomprehension and misrepresentation is pointed to in the titles of the

18. Portnoy's *Complaint*, p. 54.

two sections of Roth's most important novel, *My Life as a Man*. The first section, containing two short stories "by" Peter Tarnopol, is called "Useful Fictions," and the second part of the book, Tarnopol's purported autobiographical account of his marriage, is called "My True Story." Tarnopol's struggle, simply put, is to distinguish between the two. The very last sentences of the book suggest that Tarnopol is getting there: "Oh, my God, I thought—now you. You being you! And *me!* *This me who is me being me and none other!*" If, indeed, Tarnopol knows the difference between useful fictions and true stories, between the characters in books and the people whom he addresses as "you," and, most of all, between the me being someone else and the me being me, he is, perhaps, as Dr. Spielvogel might say, ready to begin his life as a man.

# Malamud's Jewish Metaphors

DAVID R. MESHER

DEFINING THE JEWISH ELEMENT IN THE fiction of any author is almost as difficult as achieving a uniformly acceptable definition of Jewishness in general. In Bernard Malamud's writing, however, Jewishness is more of a literary device than it is a religious, historical, or sociological representation.<sup>1</sup> Malamud's use of Jewish characters and subjects is metaphorical and idiosyncratic, and it must be understood within the context of his fiction without recourse to external sources and familiar assumptions; further, Malamud's metaphor of Jewishness has changed considerably since his first stories were published, and being Jewish in a recent novel like *The Tenants* no longer means what it did in an earlier work like *The Assistant*.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, the theme of Jewishness is of central importance in many of Malamud's stories and in all of his novels after the first, *The Natural* (1952). This consistent preoccupation provides sufficient material to show a general development in Malamud's metaphor of Jewishness and to discuss the direction of its change.

Many of Malamud's early works are predicated upon the protagonist's necessary acceptance of his Jewish identity. This is perhaps most readily seen in *A New Life* (1961), a novel otherwise devoid of Jewish content, where the acceptance by S. Levin, who ignores his origins throughout the work, is only ironically suggested. The story describes Levin's first disastrous year as an instructor at small, conservative Cascadia College. Though Levin is ignorant of the history of his predecessor, Leo Duffy, his activities become a "carbon copy" of Duffy's (325), including an affair with Pauline, the wife of his colleague, Gerald Gilley. Levin and Duffy are doubles, one of Malamud's favorite techniques; Levin slowly recognizes this, but persists in repeating personal and professional transgressions until he, like Duffy, must leave Cascadia at the end of his first year. Levin's Jewishness is not mentioned until the final pages of the novel, and then only implied by Pauline, who is leaving Gilley for him. Their conversation takes the reader back to the novel's beginning, when Levin had hoped that the move to Cascadia would help bury a past that included alcoholism. As a sign of his new life, Levin arrives—again like

1. Jewish elements in Malamud's writing have received little attention. Sidney Richman, in *Bernard Malamud* (N.Y.: Twayne, 1966), has even claimed that "it is misleading to pursue the theme of Jewishness too far" (27). Two critics who have discussed Malamud's Jewish themes are Sanford Pinsker, *The Schlemiel as Metaphor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1971), 87-124, and Robert Alter, "Malamud as a Jewish Writer," *Commentary*, 42, 3: 71-76.

2. All page citations found in the text are for the original editions of Malamud's novels and short story collections, published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

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Duffy—wearing a beard in what Gilley describes as “a sort of beardless town” (23). But in the photograph which he had sent with his application, Levin was clean shaven. As Pauline prepares to leave Gilley, Levin asks her “why she had picked his application out of the pile Gilley had discarded.” She answers, “Your picture reminded me of a Jewish boy I knew in college who was very kind to me during a trying time in my life” (361). Only then does Levin realize that the entire episode in Cascadia has resulted from the Jewish identity that he had sought to disregard forever. With an allusion to the Chosen People, Levin responds, “So I was chosen” (361).

S. Levin's futile rejection of his Jewish identity in *A New Life* is only implicitly revealed; Malamud deals with the same theme more explicitly in “The Lady of the Lake,” a story collected in *The Magic Barrel* (1958). In that story, another Levin travels from his New York home for a vacation in Europe, “seeking romance.” In Paris, “although he had signed the hotel register with his right name, Levin took to calling himself Henry R. Freeman” (105). Like other Malamudian characters, with the loss of his name Freeman loses his identity; “Freeman” is, of course, an ironic name for a man who cannot make peace with himself and his heritage. In Italy, Freeman has “a quick, astonished look at Lake Maggiore” (105), and decides to stop off there. In Stresa, a town on the lake, Freeman is bored until, rowing out to the Isola del Dongo in a rented boat, he sees from a distance that

a woman was standing this side of a low marble wall, watching the water. He could not, of course, make out her face, though he sensed she was young; only the skirt of her white dress moved in the breeze. He imagined someone waiting for her lover, and was tempted to speak to her, but then the wind blew up strongly and the waves rocked the boat (109).

Freeman returns to the island in search of the girl, and finds her swimming in the lake. Falling in love, Freeman approaches her; the girl asks if he is an American, and he answers, “That's right.”

The girl studied him for a full minute, and then hesitantly asked, “Are you, perhaps, Jewish?”

Freeman suppressed a groan. Though secretly shocked by the question, it was not, in a way, unexpected. Yet he did not look Jewish, could pass as not—had. So without batting an eyelash, he said, no, he wasn't. And a moment later added, though he personally had nothing against them (113).

Freeman's blatant denial of his Jewish identity secures his fate. Although he returns several times to the island, and falls in love with Isabella, he never understands her hints. When she likens seven mountains in the distance to a menorah, “a seven-branched candelabrum holding white candles in the sky,” Freeman is only able to think that she saw his circumcision while they were swimming nude, and to feel “constrained to tell her that circumcision was de rigueur in stateside hospitals” (128).

Finally, Isabella reveals that she is not the daughter of the del Don-gos, owners of the island, but of their caretaker. Disturbed, Freeman still professes his love, and returns to marry her. At this point, Isabella again asks him if he is a Jew. When Freeman reiterates his denial, Isabella bares her breasts and “to his horror he discerned tatooed on the soft and tender flesh a bluish line of distorted numbers” (132). The tatoo is a legacy from Buchenwald, and Isabella then tells him, “I can’t marry you. We are Jews. My past is meaningful to me. I treasure what I suffered for” (132). Though Freeman reaches out to hold her and tell her the truth, she is gone.

Like S. Levin, Henry Levin/Freeman finally realizes that denying one’s heritage or one’s name is tantamount to denying oneself. Freeman is in search of love, but to love another one must first accept himself. Freeman, unable to reconcile himself to the responsibilities and limitations of his Jewishness, cannot love.

Jewishness, in *A New Life* and “The Lady of the Lake,” is a matter of identity; it forms an integral part of the individual’s personality, and its denial, which is a type of self-denial, is either futile or disastrous. In *The Assistant* (1957), the novel which preceded *A New Life*, the theme of Jewishness is similar but more developed and complex. The story concerns Morris Bober, a poor grocer, his daughter Helen, and their relations with Frank Alpine, who first robs the grocery and then returns and tries to rectify the crime by working in the store. Though Frank likes Morris and falls in love with his daughter, his old habits die hard: he begins to steal from the till and later rapes Helen. Afterwards, Frank is truly repentant; by the time of Morris’ death, Frank has become the grocer’s double, accepting the burden not only of his impoverished life but of Morris’ philosophy of humility and humanity as well. In Malamud’s metaphor, Frank becomes a Jew.

Jewishness is a prominent issue in *The Assistant*. One of Frank’s first questions, to which Morris responds affirmatively, is if “you people are Jews” (38). Morris’ Jewishness is difficult to define. At the funeral the rabbi attempts to explain it:

When a Jew dies, who asks if he is a Jew? He is a Jew, we don’t ask. There are many ways to be a Jew. So if somebody comes to me and says, ‘Rabbi, shall we call such a man Jewish who lived and worked among gentiles and sold them pig meat, trayfe, that we don’t eat it, and not once in twenty years comes inside a synagogue, is such a man a Jew, rabbi?’ To him I will say, ‘Yes. Morris Bober was to me a Jew because he lived in the Jewish experience, which he remembered, and with the Jewish Heart.’ Maybe not to our formal tradition—for this I don’t excuse him—but he was true to the spirit of our life—to want for others that which he wants also for himself. He followed the Law which God gave to Moses on Sinai and told him to bring to the people. He suffered, he endu-red, but with hope. Who told me this? I know. He asked for himself little—nothing, but he wanted for his beloved child a better existence than he had. For such reasons he was a Jew (229-230).

Earlier, Morris discusses some of these topics when Frank asks him, "what is a Jew anyway?" (123). Morris first tells Frank that his "father used to say to be a Jew all you need is a good heart" (124). But Frank isn't satisfied with this; he asks Morris whether a good heart makes a man a "real Jew" if he doesn't keep kosher, or say prayers, or cover his head, or close his store on holidays as the law requires. Morris responds that sometimes

to have to eat, you must keep open on holidays. On Yom Kippur I don't keep open. But I don't worry about kosher, which is to me an old-fashioned law. What I worry is to follow the Jewish law. (For Morris, that law) means to do right, to be honest, to be good. Our life is hard enough. Why should we hurt somebody else? For everybody should be the best, not only for you or me. We ain't animals. This is why we need the Law. This is what a Jew believes (124).

The character of Morris Bober is a personification of Malamud's humanistic philosophy. Though Morris is, after all, human and can be tempted even into burning down his store for the fire insurance, he still represents an ideal to which both Frank Alpine and the reader are meant to aspire. But his general humanity is not unique to Judaism, or to Jews; even his Law is only a restated golden rule and, as Frank recognizes, "other religions have those ideas, too" (124). Morris does more, though, than follow this golden rule; he suffers for it and empathizes with the suffering of others. As Malamud says near the novel's beginning, "The world suffers. *He* felt every schmerz" (7). Suffering is the key word for describing the human condition. Morris, who humbly defines others by himself, believes that Jews "suffer because they are Jews" (125). Indeed, in the decades following the Second World War and the Nazi destruction of European Jewry, Jews became a symbol for suffering humanity, capping the longest continuous history in Western civilization—a history filled with miseries inflicted by others—with their worst Holocaust since the Diaspora began. To accept one's Jewishness means, in *The Assistant*, to experience and understand the human condition.

Ironically, Morris' definition is hardly distinguishable from one that Frank himself constructs in a momentary outbreak of anti-Semitism:

That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew (88).

Frank ascribes the suffering of the Jews to a perverse masochism, which better describes Frank himself than any of the novel's Jewish characters. Morris views it differently; he tells Frank that "if you live, you suffer. Some people suffer more, but not because they want" (125).

Malamud seems to subscribe to the commonplace that the Jews, if a "chosen people," were chosen to suffer. His early work concentrates primarily on Jewish characters, or on other immigrants and minorities



co-existing with Jews in the squalid ghetto of the author's imagination. Surely Malamud acknowledges that all people suffer, not just Jews. Though he exploits the Jews' history to create a symbol for suffering mankind in his early fiction, Jews are more than symbols in Malamud's work; they are also the guardians and preservers of a cultural tradition based largely on this history of suffering which no Malamudian character successfully repudiates or rejects. Helen Bober is one who must choose, in a sense, between fidelity to her Jewish heritage and honesty with herself; she realizes that

although she had only loosely been brought up as Jewish she felt loyal to the Jews, more for what they had gone through than what she knew of their history or theology—loved them as a people, thought with pride of herself as one of them (132).

There are, of course, more negative characterizations of Jews in Malamud's fiction, like those of the Karps, father and son, the rich and obnoxious opposites of the Bobers in *The Assistant*. The two families represent the two types of Jews found throughout Malamud's early work. The Karps are Jews by virtue of their birth, the Bobers by virtue of their sensitivity and humanity. The latter constitute the more significant category for Malamud, though they may be Jews in metaphor only. The concept of metaphoric Jewishness is perhaps best illustrated by the conversion of Frank Alpine. The final line of *The Assistant* relates simply that after the Passover Frank "became a Jew" (246). Malamud does not present this as a religious conversion, though the phrase is vague enough to allow for such a literal reading. Frank has more likely become a metaphoric Jew only, and this is accomplished not suddenly in the last line, but gradually as documented in the novel. Under the tutelage of Morris Bober, Frank slowly learns the significance of suffering, and as a sufferer he evolves, according to Malamud's metaphor, into a Jew.

This progressive conversion is first recognized by Ward Minogue, the arch-anti-Semite of the novel, who functions as Frank's unregenerate alter-ego: Ward, for example, is the one who decides to rob the Bober's grocery, who strikes Morris during the robbery, and who later assaults Helen in the park before Frank saves her and then rapes her himself. To keep Ward from blackmailing him, Frank threatens to telephone Ward's father "at the police station and tell him under which rock he can find" his son. Ward bitterly retorts that Frank is a "stinking kike" (145). Though Frank may be a Jew in the eyes of an anti-Semite, to the Jews he is still a gentile outsider. Indeed, he reverts to a character similar to Ward when he completes the other's attempt to rape Helen, who, until then nearly in love with Frank, calls him an "uncircumcised dog" (168); this serves as a reflection of Helen's repulsion at Frank's animality, and also as a reminder that, despite Ward's appraisal, Frank has not suffered for others enough to be considered a Jew.



Much of Frank's misery in the novel arises from being suspended in this limbo: neither a Jew to the Jews nor a gentile to the gentiles, Frank is an archetypal outsider. When Morris dies, however, the prospect for a gradual transition evaporates for Frank. He can no longer be the assistant, an apprentice in suffering to Morris. The grocer, the symbol of suffering for others, is buried and, like the phoenix, Frank literally emerges from that grave the new grocer, sufferer, and metaphoric Jew. The change is recognized by Helen, who thinks that Frank is "not the same man" he was before her father died (243). Frank adds all of Morris' old burdens to his own miseries, including the support of Ida and Helen, and even begins to duplicate the deceased grocer's way of life. He opens up for the old Polish woman early in the morning, drinks tea with Breitbart, a lightbulb salesman, in the backroom, and peers into his competitors' windows at night. In his new identity as a metaphoric Jew, Frank thinks "of growing himself a beard, but was afraid it would scare some of the customers away, so he settled for a mustache" (245). His circumcision is, like the mustache, another symbol of his new life—and also dispels part of Helen's haunting epithet, "uncircumcised dog." Nevertheless, the circumcision is performed in a hospital, and there is no hint of any religious ritual involved. Indeed, the circumcision, like the conversion, is only a figurative expression of the pain and suffering that have made Frank a Jew. *The Assistant* concludes on that note:

One day in April Frank went to the hospital and had himself circumcised. For a couple of days he dragged himself around with a pain between his legs. The pain enraged and inspired him. After Passover he became a Jew (246).

Frank himself recognizes the relationship between suffering and the metaphor of being a Jew at Morris' funeral: "Suffering, he thought, is like a piece of goods. I bet the Jews could make a suit of clothes out of it. The other funny thing is that there are more of them around than anybody knows about" (231). Frank is one of those no one knows about, a Jew not by birth or religion but because, in Malamud's metaphor, he suffers.

*The Fixer* (1966) exhibits the first important change in Malamud's metaphor of Jewishness. The novel is loosely based on the true story of Mendel Beiliss, a Russian Jew imprisoned by anti-Semitic Tsarist officials on charges of having murdered a Christian child for ritual purposes. In the novel, Yakov Bok, the imprisoned fixer, is guilty only of hiding his Jewish identity. In many ways Bok is an archetypal Malamudian Jew, and suffering is still associated in the novel with Jewishness. At one point, for example, Bok hallucinates that his cell is filled with other prisoners. He asks if they are "Jews or Russians?" They reply, "We are Russian prisoners," but to Bok they still "look like Jews" (319).

Like Helen in *The Assistant*, Bok is also placed in a position where defection from the Jewish people would be easy and advantageous. In an

interview with Bibikov, the Investigating Magistrate, Bok claims to be a freethinker and an agnostic. Bibikov explains to him that

legally you are a Jew. The Imperial Government considers you one even though you twist and squirm. You are so recorded on your passport. Our laws concerning Jews apply to you. However, if you are ashamed of your people, why don't you leave the faith officially?

Though such a move would be beneficial to the prisoner's case, Bok answers,

I'm not ashamed, your honor. Maybe I don't always like what I see—there are Jews of all sorts, as the saying goes, but if I'm going to be ashamed of anyone, it might as well be myself (87).

Bok's image as a representative Jew silently suffering for the sins of humanity is shattered, however, at the end of *The Fixer*, when he retaliates on behalf of the oppressed, himself included. The novel concludes with Bok's fantasy of assassinating the Tsar: "Pointing the gun at the Tsar's heart (though Bibikov, flailing his white arms, cried no no no no), Yakov pressed the trigger" (334). Bibikov is himself a martyr in the novel, murdered for his support of the fixer against the forces of bigotry and hatred. But Bibikov is a proponent of gradual change within an imperfect system. Bok's experiences have radicalized him and have impressed upon him the need for violent change in such an extreme case. "As for history, Yakov thought, there are ways to reverse it. What the Tsar deserves is a bullet in the gut. Better him than us" (334). Though Bok is still one of 'Malamud's metaphoric Jews, the metaphor has changed in *The Fixer* from passive suffering for humanity to active rectification of social injustice. Malamud continues to utilize the Jew as a symbol of suffering, but adds the new dimension to his metaphor because the history of the Jews makes them likely fighters against those injustices which they themselves have suffered so long.

*The Tenants* (1971), Malamud's most recent novel, reveals a more dramatic change in his metaphor of Jewishness. The story concerns two writers, Harry Lesser, a Jew, and Willie Spearmint, a black, who find themselves competing in their work and for the love of a woman, Irene Bell. After some initial friendliness, the competition escalates into violence, and the writers murder each other at the end of the novel. The Jews of *The Tenants*—Lesser, Irene, and Levenspiel, the landlord of the nearly deserted building which the writers occupy, who needs Lesser to vacate before he can tear down the old building and replace it with a profitable apartment house—have changed from Malamud's former presentations. With the possible exception of Levenspiel, they do not suffer in the same way as Morris Bober does. Sociological changes have altered New York City since *The Assistant*—at least in Malamud's perception—and the Jew is no longer credible as a symbol of suffering in a contemporary urban

American novel. Lesser's suffering, for example, is mostly artistic; the money that he makes from the movie rights to his second novel is enough, in Willie's words, to "be King of Shit Mountain" (36). Though he struggles for a decade on his third novel, that money preserves Harry from any physical or financial difficulties.

Willie, a ghetto black, is a more likely example of suffering. He has the same problems as Lesser in achieving artistic expression, and is financially impoverished as well. But Willie fails to bear his destitution with pride; he willingly lives off of Irene's generosity, and trespasses by writing and living in Levenspiel's building. Further, he seems to expect special treatment. Even when he no longer lives with Irene, he stops by to take money out of her "loose change" (153), and he cannot believe that Levenspiel really begrudges his presence "in this smelly joint" (93). Lesser, by comparison, tells Irene that "he had worked part-time in a factory when he was on his first novel." Like Willie, Irene seems to blame the black's trouble on racial discrimination. She tells Lesser that "any factory would probably pay him half of what they paid you and expect him to do twice the amount of work." Whether this is true or not, Irene correctly recognizes Willie's recalcitrance towards whites and work when she estimates that he would "tell them to shove it" (148).

Only Levenspiel, with his pregnant teen-age daughter, sick wife, and crazy mother, seems to be affiliated with the type of sufferers that characterize Malamud's early writing. But as with Willie and Lesser, changing times have altered the conception of suffering for the landlord, too. Levenspiel himself suffers nothing, nor would the financial prosperity of his new building alleviate the condition of any of the women. Indeed, Levenspiel's self-pitying complaints and attempts to move Lesser by sympathy for his family make the landlord a very unattractive, opportunistic figure. The Jew, represented by Lesser and Levenspiel, is only an ethnic identity in *The Tenants*; though still of particular interest to the author, the Jew no longer personifies suffering. The black, however, is not the new heir to this position in the world's pity, either, as Willie seems to believe. Instead, blacks and Jews in *The Tenants* are Ishmael and Israel, two similar groups attempting, as the rabbi says in one of Lesser's dreams, "to live as one people" (216). The failure of the main doubles, Willie and Lesser, who share love, hate, art, and even personality traits, to achieve this simple co-existence suggests the author's bleak view of the future of mankind.

As the conflict between the writers becomes more intense, they regress from individual personalities to racial stereotypes. The violent conclusion of the novel is a graphic demonstration of these stereotypes: though once sensitive and intelligent artists, when Lesser and Willie meet for the final time they have degenerated into superstitious savages. Neither attempts to be a complete man, but only defends the false, stereotyped identity which he has assumed. Thus, Willie, the potent,

phallic black, attacks his enemy's genitals, while Lesser, the shrewd and crafty Jew, axes the other's brain.

Malamud's Jewish characters and concerns in *The Tenants* have obviously changed from those found in *The Assistant*. In his early novels and stories, the Jew was both an individual with human foibles and strengths, and—like Morris Bober—a symbol of humanity's inevitable suffering and possible redemption. By the time of *The Fixer*, however, the Jew has become Yakov Bok: still a sufferer, still humanity's representative, but now aware of the futility and injustice of that suffering. "What suffering has taught me," Bok concludes, "is the uselessness of suffering" (333). Yet the Jew is still singled out in *The Fixer*, not just as a victim but, also, as the agent of possible social change, because "there's no such thing as an unpolitical man, especially a Jew" (335). Thus, the first change in Malamud's metaphor of Jewishness reflects an altered perception of the world: in *The Assistant* suffering itself is beneficial, while in *The Fixer* it is a condition that should, and can, be corrected. The Jew, because of his history, remains central in each case, first as the sufferer and then as one who must work for human betterment. *The Tenants* exhibits a more fundamental change. Suffering is no more valuable than it is in *The Fixer*, but the sufferers are no longer given sympathetic treatment. They are responsible for their own situations, and hope for some alteration in the human condition is minimized by this very pessimistic portrayal. The guarded optimism and affirmation of life so characteristic of Malamud's earlier works has practically vanished from *The Tenants*.

Still, the Jew remains central in Malamud's fiction because, like the black, his history should provide him with a sense of compassion. The failure of Lesser and Willie to "feel the anguish of the other" until the moment of their mutual destruction (230), shows that the humanity which they illustrate has learned nothing from the lessons of the past. It is humanity, then, that has degenerated in the author's view, and if Malamud's fictive Jew has deteriorated from saint to murderer, he has done so as a reflection of that humanity which he consistently represents.

# God and the Holocaust

ELLIOT N. DORFF

MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN OF LATE CONCERNING the participation of God in the Holocaust and the possibility of religious faith after Auschwitz. I would like to suggest that much of the discussion could be clarified if we were to recognize, in the first place, a basic ambiguity in the Jewish concept of God. Once we decide what we mean by the term "God," many of the questions will no longer be so perplexing and religious faith will become not only possible but plausible. Moreover, in the process, we will discover some fundamental commitments of the Jewish approach to life.

## *Fusing Conceptions of God*

Throughout our history, we have been treated to a whole variety of conceptions of God. Among our most prominent thinkers we have had rationalists like Hermann Cohen and mystics like Luria, naturalists like Mordecai Kaplan, supernaturalists like S. R. Hirsch, and even total secularists like Aḥad Ha'am. This variety was possible, in part, because the Jewish tradition, from Talmudic times on, substituted Midrash for revelation, claiming that revelation ceased with the destruction of the First Temple and that, in any case, the sage learned more about God through his methodology of Midrash than the prophet could ever learn through revelation.<sup>1</sup> Jews, therefore, had great latitude in their attempt to describe God and made Judaism an intellectually lively and rich tradition.

The diversity in Jewish conceptions of God is not, however, an unmitigated blessing. Aside from the problems of authority that it raises, it causes confusion when people try to combine elements from different sources and discover that not all of the conceptions are coherent. One such classical confusion was pointed out centuries ago by Halevi and reiterated in a different form and for a different purpose by Kaplan: it is the confusion which results when we graft the original Hebrew notion of God, conceived individually as a superhuman Person, onto the Greek notion of God, conceived generically as the concept of godhood.<sup>2</sup> Halevi thought that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was so different from

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1. Cf. *San.* 11a, *B.B.* 12a.

2. Yehudah Halevi, *Kuzari*, Books IV and V; Mordecai M. Kaplan, *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion* (New York: The Reconstructionist Press, 1937, 1962), pp. 20-25; cf. also Martin Buber, *The Eclipse of God* (New York: Harper and Row, 1952), chs. 2-5.

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the God of the philosophers that there could be no connection between them. I disagree with him,<sup>3</sup> but he is clearly right in affirming the disparity in those two notions and alerting us to the problems involved in combining them. Another example is the synthesis to which I would like to call attention, i.e., that of the God of power with the God of goodness.

### *Power and Goodness*

Whether T. H. Meek is right or not in his claim that power is the original meaning of most Biblical terms referring to God and that God was associated with goodness only subsequently in the Jewish tradition,<sup>4</sup> it is certainly true that a power is a significant part of what we mean by "God." We even use that sense in common parlance today, as when lawyers say that an event was "an act of God." In such contexts "divine" means "superhuman" or "beyond human knowledge and control." In asserting the existence of divine phenomena in that sense of "divine," we stress that we human beings are not all-powerful or all-knowing; that, on the contrary, we are vastly limited in our knowledge and control of even the most fundamental conditions of human existence and welfare; and that we should, therefore, have the humility to be appreciative of the good things in life and fearful of the bad. Making us thus aware is precisely the function of the *berakhah* as well as of many other *mizvot*.

The realization of the existence and omnipresence of such superhuman powers can, of course, make one very much afraid. After all, what is out of one's control can potentially be dangerous and harmful. But, from its beginning, the Jewish tradition trusted that the presence of the divine in the world was primarily a benevolent one. Although God might manifest Himself in very negative ways, that was not considered the norm. On the contrary, the Jewish assumption that God is good and just is so deeply rooted that, throughout our history, our people have protested vehemently and eloquently whenever the events in our lives have revealed God to be unjust or malevolent, and that protest makes sense only if we first assume that God can be expected to be just and good. When things did not go well, our ancestors reacted with the conviction that the situation would improve and ultimately reach the eschatological messianic age in which all of our limitations, frustrations, and sinfulness would be eliminated because, within God, justice and goodness are fundamental.<sup>5</sup>

There is, then, a second sense of the term "God" in which "God"

3. Cf. my article, "Two Approaches to God," *Conservative Judaism*, (Winter 1976): 58-67.

4. T. H. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* (New York: Harper and Row, 1936, 1960), Chap. 3 (esp. pp. 84-5, 98-102, 116). Cf. also Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), Chap. 2 (esp. pp. 21, 29-32).

5. Thus, "Tov" (the good) is God's main attribute according to P. T. *Hagigah* 77c, *Ecc. Rab.* 7:8 and *Ruth Rab.* 3:16; and God's mercy will assert itself if man repents (*Pesik.* 164a). God requites men according to their own measure ("middah ke-neged middah," *San.* 90a, b; *Tosefta Sotah* 3; P. T. *Sotah* 17a, b), but the measure of good always exceeds that of evil and

means good. In this sense, the term is used to express extreme approval of certain qualities or acts, including the qualities and acts of human beings. Thus, we often refer to love, care, and concern as divine qualities, and we mean that those qualities are very good, that they make men godly in contradistinction to bringing out their animal nature.

Why our ancestors combined notions of power with notions of goodness in their conception of God is a matter of interpretation. It might have been because their assessment of the conditions of life was optimistic and that they honestly thought that all would work out well in the end; or it may have been because they viewed life pessimistically and, therefore, created a conception of a benign God in order to alleviate their deepest fears; or, in a more traditional mode, it may have been because they had immediate, personal experience with a benevolent God. Whatever their reason, the Holocaust has made it clear (if it was not clear before) that the powers-that-be in the world, whether natural or human, do not always work for human good. In other words, our experience has shown amply that the combination of power and goodness that our ancestors built into their conception of God is an inherently incongruous and unstable combination. Consequently, if we are going to be able to make any sense of the relationship of God to the Holocaust, we are going to have to sort out once again the two elements of power and goodness.

### *God and the Holocaust*

With these considerations in mind, we can now face the question directly: is God in the Holocaust and other evil experiences or not? The answer depends upon which sense of "divine" you are using. If you have the second sense in mind, then God is obviously not in something as horrible as the Holocaust for the divine is, by definition, good. That saves God's benevolence, but it raises major problems in regard to His omnipresence and unity.

Nevertheless, there is support in our tradition for this view. In particular, (1) the tradition asserts strongly that we have free will. That, of course, means that we, and not God, have power over our moral decisions, and the tradition did not shrink from the implications of such a view. It claimed that "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except reverence for Heaven,"<sup>6</sup> and that God does not interfere in our moral deliberations. That does not constitute a diminution of God's omnipotence, according to the tradition, because it is God Himself who chooses to restrict His power in this way so as to allow for human free will. And even if we use our free

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punishment ("middat tovah merubbah mi-middat puraniyyot," *Mekhilta Beshallah*, ed. Lauterbach, II, p. 113; ed. Horowitz-Rubin, p. 166). I should note that one opinion in the tradition makes Messianic times different from our own times only in that the *political* frustration of the Jewish people would be alleviated; otherwise, we would all remain normal men, much as we are. Cf. *Berakhot* 34b.

6. *Berakhot* 33b.



choice to commit as gross an evil as the Holocaust was, God dare not interfere lest we lose one of our distinctly human traits (the ability to choose between right and wrong) and become automata. Thus, the doctrine of free will can be interpreted to lend support to the position that God is not an active cause of the Holocaust; He merely allows human beings to perpetrate it. Moreover, (2) the tradition describes God in very positive terms: He is "the savior," and His mercies are without end, as we daily recite in our prayers. In fact, the *Shema* demands that we *love* God and, unless we are masochists, that demand seems to make sense only if God is good and, hence, an appropriate object for our love. Thus, here, too, there is ample support for the position that God simply is not part of moral evils and that "divine" should, therefore, be understood in the sense of "morally good."

Even so, I would claim that that position is wishful thinking. We obviously would *like* to say that there is a God who is totally good, but that does us a disservice because it hides a large part of experience. The fact simply is that there *is* evil in this world, and to leave God out of it would, I think, make him a very pallid God, a mere personification of our desires and moral conceptions.

As a result, in answering the question I would prefer to use the first notion of God described above—i.e., the one in which the "divine" refers to superhuman qualities and events, whether they be good or bad. I would then affirm that God *is* in the Holocaust. In this way I would be denoting that the events of the Holocaust went far beyond the normal conception of human power, psychological maneuverability, and morality.<sup>7</sup>

The immediate problem with my view is, of course, that it makes God responsible for evil as well as for good, and, as we saw before, there is at least some support in the tradition for denying that evil derives from God. I would like to point out, however, that there is also traditional support for the view that God is responsible for evil, and that may well be the mainstream position. For instance, according to Isaiah, God proclaims: "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace, *and create evil*; I, the Lord, do all these things."<sup>8</sup> When the Rabbis used this verse in the morning prayers, they changed it to: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God,

7. I thus disagree with Dr. Kaplan who claims (in *The Meaning of God in Modern Jewish Religion*, p. 76) that "earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, devastating storms and floods, famines and plagues, noxious plants and animals . . . are simply that phase of the universe which has not yet been completely penetrated by godhood," for "the modern conception of God" follows the less frequent Rabbinic opinion according to which, "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not associate His name with evil, but only associates it with that which is good" (*Gen. R.* 3:6, cf. *Gen. R.* 53:4). He admits that "this involves a radical change in the traditional concept of God" because it conflicts with His omnipotence and omniscience. I am not so much concerned that it conflicts with either of those, but I *am* concerned that such a doctrine would deny God's unity, as I will point out shortly, and I am even more concerned that it tends to deny the reality of evil. Dr. Kaplan, of course, specifically affirms that evils exist (*Op. cit.*, p. 84), but it does seem hard to take them seriously if the power of God is behind the good but does not participate in perpetrating evil.

8. Isaiah 45:7; cf. also Lamentations 3:37-38.



who forms the light and creates darkness, makes peace and *creates everything*"; but, as they themselves explain, they did so because of the need for a more felicitous expression suitable to the language of prayer, *not* because they wanted to deny that God creates evil.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Satan, the personification of evil, is always portrayed in Biblical literature as an instrument of the Divine, and the Rabbis followed suit.<sup>10</sup> The Rabbis even claimed that a Jew must *thank* God for whatever evil befalls him, as well as for the good things that he enjoys:

Do not behave towards Me as the heathens behave toward their gods. When happiness comes to them, they sing praises to their gods . . . , but when retribution comes upon them they curse their gods . . . If I bring happiness upon you give thanks, and when I bring sufferings give thanks also.<sup>11</sup>

They went further yet: a man must *bless* God for evil as he blesses Him for good, and they saw this as a much more profound type of love of God than the kind mentioned earlier in which we love Him only for the good that He does:

A man is in duty bound to utter a benediction for the bad just as he utters one for the good; as it is said, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" (Deut. 6:5)—"with all your heart," i.e., with your two impulses, the good and the evil impulse; "with all your soul," i.e., even if He take your soul; "with all your might," i.e., with all your wealth. Another explanation of "with all your might" is with whatever measure He metes out to you, return Him thanks.<sup>12</sup>

And, finally, God inflicts punishment. Sometimes that punishment is deserved, and then God is only exercising His attribute of justice. But sometimes God punishes people contrary to all human understanding of when punishment is called for, as in this famous example:

Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: When Moses ascended on high, he found the Holy One, blessed be He, engaged in affixing crowns on the letters of the Torah. Moses said: "Lord of the Universe, why are these additions necessary?" He answered: "There will arise a man at the end of many generations, Akiba b. Joseph by name, who will expound upon each title heaps and heaps of laws." "Lord of the Universe," said Moses, "permit me to see him." He replied, "Turn around." Moses went and sat down behind eight rows (of R. Akiba's disciples and listened to the discourses upon the law) . . . Thereupon he returned to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said, "Lord of the Universe, You have such a man, and You gave the Torah through me?" He replied, "Be silent, for so I have decided." Then Moses said, "Lord of the Universe, You have shown me his Torah, show me his reward." "Turn around," said He; and Moses turned around and saw people weighing out his flesh in the market (after he had been slaughtered

9. *Berakhot* 11b; cf. Max Arzt, *Justice and Mercy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), p. 49.

10. I Kings 11:14, Ps. 109:6, Job 1:6; for the Rabbis, cf. for example P. T. *Ta'anit* 65b, B. T. *Kiddushin* 81 a-b, *Esther Rab.* 7:13 (on Esther 3:9), etc.

11. *Mekhilla* on Ex. 20:23 (ed. Lauterbach, Vol. II, p. 277).

12. *Berakhot* 9:5.

by the Romans). "Lord of the Universe," cried Moses, "such is his knowledge of Torah, and such is his reward?" He replied, "Be silent, for so I have decided."<sup>13</sup>

That, it seems to me, articulates precisely what our problem with the Holocaust is, for it deals with specifically that type of evil which is the suffering of the innocent. And the Rabbis clearly make God responsible for it in this passage. Of course they also tried to exonerate Him elsewhere by taking refuge in His omniscience: perhaps the slaughtered and the suffering did, in fact, sin, even if such sins were hidden from us, and God's punishment is, therefore, appropriate and perhaps even benevolent.<sup>14</sup> But they were aware that, in many cases, such a line of argument would simply not do: there is a residue of evil in this world, there is undeserved suffering, and God is responsible for it. And, after all, that is precisely what we should have expected from the Rabbis, given that they waged an unceasing war against the Zoroastrian notion that there was a separate power which caused evil, for that, as they knew, would violate God's unity:

"I, even I, am He, and there is no God in addition to me; it is I that kill, and it is I that make alive; I wound and I heal" (Deut. 32:39). This verse is an answer to those who say, "There is no Power in heaven," or to those who say "There are two Powers in heaven," or to those who say, "There is no Power who can make alive or kill, do evil or do good."<sup>15</sup>

All of this, then, indicates that for the Rabbinic tradition, too, the root sense of "God" did *not* assume that He was absent from evil. On the contrary, He created evil and inflicts punishment—sometimes contrary to all human understanding of when punishment is deserved and when not.

### *God's Justice and Goodness*

That brings us to the second problem with affirming God's responsibility for the Holocaust. The tradition, after all, maintains that God is both just and good. That belief gave moral courage and hope to thousands of our ancestors because it justified decency in the face of gross indecency: God, Himself, would ultimately punish the wicked and bring triumph to the righteous in a messianic age, and so it makes sense to act morally and constructively despite all appearances to the contrary. But if God caused the Holocaust, how can we any longer believe in His justice and goodness?

The Rabbis themselves were hard put to defend the apparent lapses in God's justice, and sometimes they simply admitted that we cannot

13. *Menahot* 29b; cf. also the opinion of R. Meir on *Berakhot* 7a.

14. Cf. *Ta'anit* 11a; *Kiddushin* 40b; and *Berakhot* 5b, where the notion appears that the punishment which God inflicts is a product of His love.

15. *Sifre Deut.*, "*Ha'azinu*," par. 329.

understand His acts.<sup>16</sup> It seems to me that the Holocaust makes it totally impossible to ignore any longer the great mass of evidence against that tenet. Nevertheless, my attitudes toward life are virtually the same as theirs who believe that God is just. That is, despite the evidence of the Holocaust, I still believe that justice, morality and compassion are crucial, even if they are not rewarded.<sup>17</sup> We simply have to advance our thinking to a point which some of the Rabbis had already reached—i.e., that doing the right thing for the sake of reward is really not the proper motivation and often does not work out anyway, and that in the end the only reward for performing a *mizvah* is having done it and the impetus which that gives to performing another *mizvah*.<sup>18</sup>

Similar considerations apply to God's benevolence. I certainly would agree that there *are* positive phenomena in our experience, and we must be as honest about those as we are about negative phenomena like the Holocaust. I would want to go further: I would want to say that if the evidence of negative versus positive is roughly even, we should accentuate the positive, choosing to describe the glass as half-full rather than as half-empty and to act constructively on the basis of that view.<sup>19</sup> And I would even endorse the stance of Job and of many of our ancestors who maintained their commitment to Judaism in the face of horrible demonstrations of the evil that occurs from time to time in this world, for I do think that the Jewish way of life is worth dying for, if necessary.

What gives me trouble is the tradition's conviction that all will be right in the end. I certainly *wish* that man could be cured of at least some of his more grievous afflictions, like his propensity to make war, and I think that we have a positive duty to *try* to free man of those maladies, based on our generally positive attitude toward the world and the ample evidence

16. Cf. A. Cohen, *Everyman's Talmud* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1949), pp. 110-120. For examples of the incomprehensibility of God's justice, cf. *Berakhot* 7a, *Menaḥot* 29b, and, probably, *Avot* 4:19.

17. For Kant, of course, it makes sense only if it is not rewarded!

18. *Avot* 4:2. This puts me in direct opposition to R. Reuben, about whom the following is told:

It happened once that R. Reuben was in Tiberias on the Sabbath, and a philosopher asked him: "Who is the most hateful man in the world?" He replied, "The man who denies the Creator." "How so?" said the philosopher. R. Reuben answered: " 'Honor thy father and mother, thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor, thou shalt not covet.' No man denies the derivative (i.e., the separate commandments) until he has previously denied the Root (i.e., God), and no man sins unless he has denied Him who commanded him not to commit that sin" (Tosefta *Shevu'ot* 3:6).

I agree that it is *easier* to be motivated to observe the commandments if you think that God will punish you for not observing them and reward you if you do; but, as the Rabbis recognized elsewhere, (a) that is *not* the proper motivation (*Avot* 1:3); (b) it does not even work out that way, at least as far as we know (cf. note 16), and it must, therefore, eventually lose force as a motivation; and (c) moreover, it is possible to observe Jewish law without a theological whipping stick—indeed, without God at all (cf. *Pesikta*, XV, ed. Buber, 120a-121b, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 254).

19. Cf. *Eruvin* 13b for a similar view held by Bet Hillel.

that exists in our experience to support it. I also think that ultimate emancipation is beyond man's ability to achieve, and in that sense we will need God's help if we are ever going to attain it, as the tradition emphasized.<sup>20</sup> But man's past history, and especially the Holocaust, has made me too skeptical to believe with a complete faith that in the future he will be completely relieved of all of his limitations. The evil manifestations of God have been too rife. I *hope* that good will triumph, but it is a hope and not a conviction for me, since I entertain considerable doubt that it will happen, despite my desires. The tradition had no such doubts. But since the tradition's conviction referred to Messianic times, and since I do want to affirm the pragmatic upshot of the doctrines of benevolence and redemption (i.e., that we must act constructively while still realizing the limits of our ability), perhaps my position is not so far from the traditional one, although it certainly is not identical with it.

One last point must be made here. In maintaining that God caused the Holocaust in the first sense of "God" and that the second sense is a separate meaning which is at times inconsistent with the first, am I just enunciating a softer version of Richard Rubenstein's philosophy? I think not, because I *am* affirming the second sense as well as the first. That is, I am agreeing with the classical Jewish commitment to constructive action in this world through both the ritual and moral *mizvot*, and that commitment is based on the faith that our action can make a difference, that the conditions of life are not incorrigibly beyond remedy. I may have doubts about whether the human condition is ultimately and fully redeemable, but I would, nevertheless, adopt the tradition's optimistic and enterprising philosophy of life regarding the possibility of less extreme improvements because I think that it is both consistent with past experience and a wise formula for our future action. It is that conviction which is expressed in the second sense of "God," and I would affirm it as I would the first.

### *Truth at the Price of Consistency*

I have tried to show that the traditional concept of God involved a combination of power and goodness, two elements which our experience has shown to be often discordant. Consequently, clarity about God's role in the Holocaust demands that we sort out those two factors in what we mean by "God." That does not mean that we should deny either one of them; it merely means that if we want consistency we must separate those two attributes which the tradition ascribed to God. On the other hand, if we want our concept of God to express the crucial elements of our experience, we must allow both the powerful and the good to be parts of God, however incongruous they may be. Here, as usual, Rabbinic tradition preferred to tolerate inconsistency in order to encompass truth.

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20. Psalm 146 is a good example of this, but it is only one of many.

# Milton Steinberg's Philosophy of Religion

SIMON NOVECK

ON MARCH 20, 1977, THE JEWISH WORLD will mark the twenty-seventh anniversary of the death of Milton Steinberg, one of the most creative minds in the American rabbinate in recent years. Surely few of his colleagues during the 1930s and 1940s approached Steinberg in the lucidity of his thinking and in his skill in putting his thoughts into systematic discourse.

Steinberg's theological writings are marked by a complete openness and receptivity to truth whatever the source, by the logical bent of his mind and by his great concern for clarity and fairness in stating other points of view. Though written in the felicitous language which characterized all of his writings, his theological essays are never shallow or superficial. His point of departure is always that of Jewish tradition for which he shows a constant sense of reverence. He also frequently referred to himself as a "Hellene." Though, in his last years, the Greek view played less of a role in his outlook than it did in earlier life, the rational emphasis of Greek thought, its intellectual freedom and scientific spirit, as well as its aesthetic values, remained permanent influences.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from the Jewish tradition and Classical philosophy, the intellectual framework out of which Steinberg's religious outlook grew was the entire range of modern philosophy from Descartes and Spinoza to Whitehead. However, for the most part, it was from the insights of twentieth century theistic philosophers that he drew the universe of discourse for his thinking about religion. He read with care the works on religion by America's "Golden Age" philosophers: Royce's *The World and the Individual* and *Religious Aspects of Philosophy*, James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* and Dewey's *A Common Faith*. He also drew from personalist thinkers like Borden Bowne whose volume on theism served him as an introduction to the philosophical problems about God.

Steinberg was also influenced by several European thinkers in the domain of speculative metaphysics. He was aware of the anti-metaphysical temper of twentieth century philosophy, in accordance with which pragmatists, empiricists and existentialists rejected as meaningless all propositions about the essence of the universe. But, at the end of the forties, two major metaphysical schools were still flourishing—the realist

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1. "Hellenism and Judaism," in *Hanukah, The Feast of Lights*, edited by Emily Solis-Cohen (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 15.

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metaphysics of Alexander, Whitehead and Hartshorne, and the neo-scholasticism of Maritain, Gilson and other Catholic thinkers. Steinberg was drawn to the former precisely because they reasserted the legitimacy and importance of metaphysical ventures.

Out of this technical background and out of his familiarity with the history of Jewish rationalism came essays which helped lay the foundation for a revival of Jewish theology in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.

### Religion as *Weltanschauung*

Religious faith, in the sense of a theistic or God interpretation, was, according to Steinberg, the most neglected aspect of the Jewish heritage. Religion was the "central motif" and the "climactic expression of the whole complex of Jewish living." That motif, he was convinced, could not be eliminated, without disjoining the entire organism.<sup>2</sup>

Judaism, like other religions, developed in response to four distinct human needs. The first of these is for ritual or folkways which, to Steinberg, represented a "spiritualizing device" to sanctify life, a method of discipline and a way of participating in an historic tradition.

The second aspect of religion—that of ethics—meets man's need for guidance in his patterns of conduct. Steinberg believed these patterns to be rooted in the nature of the universe and an "inescapable law of reality." Just as there are universal natural laws, there must also be laws regulating human relationships; otherwise there would be a gap in the unity of the universe. Steinberg did not agree with naturalists like Santayana, Dewey and Hook for whom the universe was morally neutral. He accepted the Jewish view that goodness was a quality objectively present in men and in their conduct.

A third need which religion meets is that of "a focus and stimulus of the religious emotion." It must find a place for the "religious aestheticism" of Santayana, for the varieties of religious experience discussed by William James, for Schleiermacher's sense of dependence and for Rudolph Otto's concept of the Holy. No religion, Steinberg argued, could be called complete that did not find room for all types of internal religious or subjective experience, including the "blinding illumination of the mystic."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, said Steinberg, religion fulfills the need for a world outlook or, as he put it, a "reasoned scheme of things." Men have two choices in their attitude towards the cosmos. They can interpret it as a "monstrous horror ground out by some blind chance with no more significance than a tale told by an idiot" or they can see it as the "outward manifestation of the

2. Milton Steinberg, *A Partisan Guide to the Jewish Problem* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co.) pp. 183-4.

3. Milton Steinberg, *A Believing Jew* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.), pp. 67-68.

phenomenology of the spirit.”<sup>4</sup> Steinberg held that only a theistic interpretation was tenable. But theistic or atheistic, most people, he insisted, need an interpretation of reality to make life meaningful.

Steinberg pleaded for “equilibrium and balance” in religion so that it would answer all of these needs. He criticized the outlook of Royce for being “pure intellectualism and morality” and that of James as “blankly sterile emotionalism.” The blunder of the latter was to take the emotional aspect of religion and identify it with the totality of religious life. Similarly, he protested against what he regarded as an overemphasis in many churches and synagogues on social justice because they neglected the theological aspect of religion.<sup>5</sup> In spite of his plea for a balanced view, Steinberg put more emphasis on *Weltanschauung* than on the other aspects. “Philosophical reflection is the beginning of piety,” he said. “Religion is a matter of cosmology basically and I cannot interpret it otherwise than from that position.”<sup>6</sup>

Steinberg was not, however, a detached thinker who engaged in “pure speculation for its own sake.” His interest was in “religious speculation” as part of his quest for insight, meaning and goodness in life. Science cannot provide such understanding; it explores particular categories rather than “things as a whole.” It deals with phenomena which can be weighed or measured, not with the true or the good or with ultimate reality. Given a God faith, he tells us with a sort of suppressed excitement, “the whole universe bursts into lucidity, the rationality of nature, the emergence of life, the phenomena of conscience and consciousness become intelligible.”<sup>7</sup>

In his view, failure to achieve such a coherent religious faith was responsible for some of the severest aberrations of his time—“the upsurge of anti-intellectualism, cultism and religious authoritarianism, the proliferation of neuroticisms and the latter day worship of the state, race or economic class” which he described as modern forms of idolatry.

Steinberg hailed the fact that, at the end of the 1940s, American Jewry was beginning to produce a few theologians. This development, he explained, was caused partly by philosophers and thinkers from Germany and partly by the newer Christian theology, but it was also in response to Judaism's own inner needs. Whatever the cause, for Steinberg it was a hopeful omen.<sup>8</sup>

### Criteria for a Rational Theology

Steinberg used several terms to define his own theological approach,

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4. Ibid.

5. Milton Steinberg, “A Protest Against a New Cult,” in *The Modern Thinker*, Nov. 1932.

6. Milton Steinberg, letter to Eugene Kohn, Aug. 15, 1946.

7. *Anatomy of Faith*, edited by Arthur Cohen (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.), pp. 85-86.

8. Park Avenue Synagogue Bulletin, April 6, 1949, p. 2.



frequently describing himself as a “modernist” whose creed he summed up as follows: faith in intellect, confidence in the essential goodness of man and the remediality of evil, and a strong sense of the reality of progress as part of the scheme of things. The modernist was also one who respected science and who felt that Judaism should be adapted to modern ideas and circumstances.<sup>9</sup>

He also referred to himself as a “religious rationalist” whose convictions were, in great measure, the consequence of a “rationalist-pragmatist metaphysics.” However, rationalism, to him, did not mean the abstract, analytic and deductive operations of the mind as found in geometry, or the bold “quest for certainty” of a Spinoza who designed his metaphysics and ethics mathematically. Neither did it mean the extreme rationalism of Hermann Cohen, a rationalism composed only of demonstrable propositions from which all undertones of mystery and mood had been eliminated. A religion confined only to the logically demonstrable and indifferent to the emotional hungers of men, he said, would “misrepresent the universe and feed its communicants stones for bread.” Religion is also acquired through intuition and feeling, through tradition, revelation and mystical experience; through morality and group solidarity, or a combination of these. Such non-rational approaches, however, could at best furnish tentative conclusions which then required reason to confirm or to upset them<sup>10</sup>

But even the rational process could provide only “plausible interpretations with a high measure of probability.” Descartes and Locke, Steinberg explained, had taught that the senses could not be completely trusted as sources of information concerning reality. Lobachevski and the non-Euclidians had thrown a shadow over the certainty of results obtained from Euclidian geometry. And Freud had shown that underneath logic there was the irrationality of the life drive. Thus, step by step, men had gradually stopped looking to reason for the disclosure of complete truth.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, though the vision that reason provided was “blurred, a-stigmatic, doubt-ridden, and always open to challenge,” Steinberg insisted that it still remained the “most reliable of human powers, the only (one) universally shared and readily communicated.”<sup>12</sup>

Because of its limitations, reason must be bolstered by the pragmatists’ emphasis on “practicality” or “workability” as an additional test. Steinberg could not accept the irrationalism implicit in James’ pragmatism, just as he could not accept the irrationalism implicit in in-

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9. Milton Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co.), pp. 10 and 27. For the attitude of Jewish modernists to other aspects of Judaism, see *Ibid.*, pp. 94-96, 128, 139-142, 149, 162-4.

10. *A Partisan Guide*, p. 186.

11. Milton Steinberg, Notes for a lecture to students of the Jewish Theological Seminary, April 1943.

12. Milton Steinberg, “The Uses of Faith” (unpublished article prepared for *The Nation*), May 1948.



tuitionism. But he did agree that ideas need to be tested, not only in abstract or conceptual terms, but, also, in terms of their consequences. Theism seemed to him not only the most logical but, also, the most practical idea, since it accorded meaning to human strivings and it heightened morale. In addition, it was the best foundation for ethical ideals.

But, for all its utility, James' pragmatism had another weakness—the lack of a clear-cut standard of judgment among different experiences. Steinberg, therefore, set up the additional tests of “congruity,” the requirement that the idea fit the facts, and of “economy,” that is, the choice of the simplest rather than the most complex interpretation. Based on these three tests, he was convinced that the weight of evidence was on the theistic side.<sup>13</sup>

He saw the universe as an organic unity, subject everywhere to the same law-dynamic, pulsating with energy and life. It is creative, forever calling new things into being, from solar systems to new breeds of animals and new ideas. It is rational, in the sense that everything behaves according to law, and purposive, at least in some of its phases. It also contains consciousness, having produced man who is endowed with intelligence and a thirst for truth, beauty and goodness. While not without difficulties, theism fitted these facts, met the three tests and explained reality far better than did atheism.<sup>14</sup>

But, though reason could lead to a religious interpretation of the universe, it could not prove the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, or the idea that life has meaning. Therefore, when the rational process had gone as far as it could, faith was also necessary to achieve a religious *Weltanschauung*. One must make a “venture into the heart of things,” perform an “act of faith” which, together with reason, would bring one to religious understanding.

Such acts of faith, said Steinberg, were also necessary for the scientist, as can be seen in his use of postulates or hypotheses. Scientific judgments are based on such unprovable assumptions as the objective reality of the physical world, the rationality of nature, and its uniformity in time and space. Though the scientist cannot prove these assumptions, he has faith in them because they are necessary for life.<sup>15</sup> In such a world where proof is not possible, he held, we have a right to believe.<sup>16</sup>

What we believe, however, should not be blind or arbitrary. It must be lucid in its presentation, with all terms clearly defined and the grounds of all arguments candidly stated. Essentially, what Steinberg wanted to show was that a religious outlook could be “intellectually respectable;” it

13. *Anatomy of Faith*, pp. 70-71, 103.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 102-4.

16. “The Right to Believe,” (unpublished address).

need not be "obscurantist and inconsistent with the spirit of free inquiry."<sup>17</sup>

The search for God was to be conducted "not by faith alone nor by reason alone but by a polarity of both with a dialectical relationship one with the other." This was what he called "normal religion" or theology.<sup>18</sup>

### Concept of Theism

Based on this dialectical approach, Steinberg arrived at his God faith, which, for him, was the central conviction of Judaism. He accepted the traditional conception that God is One, the Creator of all things, Law-giver, Liberator and Savior, helping the individual to overcome his limitations.<sup>19</sup> In his envisagement God is an entity or being and not merely the sum of those forces that make for the enhancement of life, as his teacher, Mordecai Kaplan, taught. He is spirit, that is, reason and moral will, the essence and ground of all things. He is the Mind of the universe that contemplates and orders all things. He possesses infinite consciousness before which all things are forever present.

God is also a moral Being, not so much in the sense that He enters into ethical relations with His own expressions, as in the deeper sense that He is the "fountainhead" and "sanction" of man's moral life. He is both transcendent, that is, apart from the world, a separate, independent Being behind the universe and, at the same time, immanent, that is, within man and the world—their ground and life.

The rebellion against the immanent conception by Kierkegaard and Barth had stimulated a return to transcendentalism in contemporary religious speculation. Steinberg saw value in this new trend for it brought modern man back to Biblical tradition which is overwhelmingly transcendental. He recognized that there was danger in conceiving God as residing in all things for it could lead to a blurring of individuality which is so basic in historic Judaism. Nevertheless, he thought that a measure of immanentism in religion was also desirable for it brings God near and makes him accessible.

Steinberg did not pretend that there was anything radically novel in his viewpoint. The student of philosophy, he said, would find its antecedents in both Jewish and philosophical thought, in rabbinic works and those of the Stoics, neo-Platonists, Hegel and Bergson. In several respects, however, his concept of theism deviated from that of Biblical and Talmudic Judaism. He believed, for example, that God manifested Himself in natural law and its regularity rather than in miracles which, for him, were part of the "folklore" from a time "when people did not have the

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17. Milton Steinberg, letter to Sidney Hook, June 17, 1946.

18. Transcript of Four Lectures delivered at the Park Avenue Synagogue, January, 1950, Lecture I, pp. 30-31.

19. *Basic Judaism*, p. 36.

same awareness of causal relations as we do." "My position," he wrote in reply to an inquiry from one of his younger congregants, "is very close to that of Spinoza. To me God is revealed in the regularity of nature, a regularity which does not allow for the suspension of nature."<sup>20</sup> Nor did Steinberg believe in providence in the traditional sense. For him, the Bergsonian analogue of a "hand pushing through the sane" which denied absolute equity in the fate of every individual seemed "thoroughly adequate." He accepted the view that "there is a direction behind the whole but no necessary meaning to the accidents which befall the individual component." It was enough for Steinberg to know that "there is a power which makes for freedom, sentiency, creativity and righteousness even though in the case of individuals the grains may fall helter-skelter."<sup>21</sup>

Though this last description would seem to bring him close to Mordecai Kaplan's conception, actually there were several differences in their attitudes to God. These were based on what Steinberg considered Kaplan's "most serious deficiency"—his refusal, as a matter of principle, to engage in philosophical speculation concerning God, His existence and nature. Steinberg summed up these differences in a paper that he gave before the Rabbinical Assembly in June 1949.

Because Dr. Kaplan...speaks so generally of the God-idea rather than of God; because, furthermore, he shrinks God to the sum of those aspects of reality which enhance man's life, these being all of God which he regards as mattering to man, because of all this, the following has resulted:

- a) The actuality of God is brought under question. It is asked: does God really exist or is He only man's notion?
- b) The universe is left unexplained. To say of God that He is a power within the scheme of things leaves the scheme altogether unaccounted for.
- c) A need arises for another God beyond and in addition to Dr. Kaplan's who shall account for the world in which they find themselves, concerning which they are insatiably curious.
- d) Something alarmingly close to tribalism in religion is revived. A God possessed of metaphysical standing, a Being who is also a principle of explanation for reality, must be beyond the parochialism of time and space, of nation and creed. But a God who is all relativist, especially such a God as Kaplan's who tends to be a function of social life, "an aspect of a particular civilization," is in imminent peril of breaking down into a plurality of deities, each civilization possessing and being informed by its own.<sup>22</sup>

These differences, however, in no way affected Steinberg's complete acceptance of other aspects of Reconstructionism. Kaplan's approach to Jewish ritual as folkways, his concept of organic community and his definition of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization remained basic tenets of Steinberg's *Weltanschauung*.<sup>23</sup>

20. Milton Steinberg, letter to Lloyd Schaper, March 20, 1942.

21. Milton Steinberg, letter to Dr. L. Richard Cipes, Jan. 16, 1939.

22. *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly of America* vol. XIII, 1949, pp. 379-380.

23. For Steinberg's relationship to Reconstructionism see Simon Noveck, *Milton Stein-*

### Interpretations of Evil

For Steinberg, the most important test of any God concept was whether it furnished an adequate explanation of evil in the world. Why was there so much misery, suffering and tragedy and why did it happen to so many decent, moral human beings? Steinberg was preoccupied with this problem throughout his life.

In his effort to justify God's ways Steinberg considered the various theories which had appeared in Jewish and philosophical tradition and found most of them unacceptable. Until the last years of his life the interpretation that he found most attractive was one based on the theory of emergent evolution suggested by the English zoologist and philosopher, C. L. Morgan, and developed by Samuel Alexander. These philosophers pointed to distinct levels in nature, reaching up from the mineral through the animal to the level of spirit. An "emergent," according to Morgan, introduces novelty which cannot be predicted from the factors already at work in a process. At critical stages new modes of relationship come into being which cannot be interpreted in terms of the factors which operate on a lower level. Steinberg, too, saw life as a kind of "evolutionary ladder." Men are "kin to the mineral, prisoners of time and space, near relatives to the plant, exposed to attack and hunger" and, like animals, engaged in a competitive struggle. In the light of this, evil is the "persistence of the circumstances of lower strata in higher." The whole evolutionary record is the "tale of the hangover of restraints" and the "saga of life's continuous victory over them." The heritage of the beast is still powerful in man, who can be irrational, cruel, destructive. But he has the intellect and skills to emancipate himself and the moral insights to overcome his destructive tendencies.<sup>24</sup>

Steinberg did not assert that this was the only possible interpretation of evil. But even if only partially satisfactory, he said, the God faith was still indicated and left less unexplained than did atheism.

During his last two years Steinberg became interested in an approach to the problem of evil based on the "unconventional but highly stimulating proposal" put forth by Peirce, Whitehead and Hartshorne of a non-absolute God. According to these modern metaphysicians, a God who is absolutely perfect, unchanging and immutable must also be static, immobile and admit of no relationships. How do we explain a changing world in terms of an absolute God who never changes, they asked?

Steinberg liked Peirce's evolutionary metaphysic which emphasized the role of chance as a factor in the universe. He thought that Peirce had a "unique and original conception of what the Godhood must be" and that

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*berg: Portrait of a Rabbi* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1977), Chap. 3, Section 2 and Chap. 5, Section 4; also Charles Leibman, "Reconstructionism in American Jewish Life," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 1970 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America), p. 11.  
24. *A Believing Jew*, pp. 26-27.

his doctrine of "tychism," or chance,<sup>25</sup> offered a "helpful hypothesis as to the existence of evil and disorder in a God directed world." Similarly, he credited Hartshorne's social conception of theism with emancipating him from "servitude to the classical metaphysicians and their God, who in his rigid eternal sameness is no God at all, certainly not the God of whom Scripture maketh proclamation nor whom the human heart requires."<sup>26</sup>

During the fall of 1949, Steinberg came across the writings of Edgar Sheffield Brightman and was also impressed by his interpretation of evil. Just as in mathematics there are irrational numbers which cannot be explained, so in life and the world there exist elements of non-rationality which Brightman calls surds. By this term he meant an evil that is not reducible to good, regardless of the operations performed on it. It is so cruel, irrational and unjust that it could not be the work of a good God. In Brightman's view, if we suppose the power of God to be finite but His will for good infinite, we have a reasonable explanation of the place of surd evil in the scheme of things. Steinberg felt that this notion of the fortuitous and the irrational, for which God is not responsible but against which He struggles, was true to reality and a force for better living.<sup>27</sup> While he had no opportunity to work out the implications of these interpretations, Steinberg candidly acknowledged the influence of these metaphysical philosophers on his thinking.

Quite clearly, Steinberg was no longer (if he ever had been) completely a defender of traditional theism. But in spite of the "unconventional" notions that he embraced, he remained a convinced theist, as is evident from a letter which he wrote to *The Reconstructionist* and which appeared in the issue of March 10, 1950, ten days before he died. In an earlier article, Immanuel Lewy, a member of the editorial Board of that publication, had written:

It is a fact that modern theologians of all faiths do not believe any longer in this doctrine (the theism of a personal, transcendental God). The criticism of theistic metaphysics by Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and modern science has made this belief as untenable as the belief that the sun turns around the earth. I have read hundreds of different philosophers and theologians of our time. None of them still subscribes to the doctrine of theism.

Steinberg wrote in reply:

Dr. Lewy's reading is regrettably incomplete. He seems to have missed Royce, Balfour, Pringle-Pattison, and Hocking; the absolute idealists such as Bradley and Bosanquet; the Personalists from Bowne to Brightman, not to mention a whole line of Continental philosophers and theologians including Lotze and Eucken.

The actual fact is that the number of those who maintain a personalist-

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25. Tychism—"the notion that absolute chance is a factor of the universe." See James Feibleman, *An Introduction to Peirce's Philosophy* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1946), p. 405.

26. *Proceedings of Rabbinical Assembly*, vol. XIII, p. 377.

27. Transcript of Four Lectures, Lecture III, pp. 27 and 30.

theistic position is legion and includes not only religious traditionalists (neo-Thomists like Maritain and neo-Reformationists like Barth and Brunner), nor Existentialists (Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Marcel, Buber), but all the sizable company of metaphysical rationalists pointed to above.

### Attitude to Man and Human Nature

Until 1944 there is no evidence of any sustained thinking on Steinberg's part on the problem of man. In his earlier period he had shared the commonly accepted optimistic notion of all modernists that the evil in human nature was superficial, due primarily to the environment. But, during World War II, he began to modify his optimistic attitude. The terrible events overseas and the new psychiatry which taught that at the core of human personality there is a complex of blind irrational drives, made him realize that the evil in man was deeper and more intense than he had suspected.

But though he had modified his view, Steinberg did not agree with what he regarded as a morbid preoccupation with sin characteristic of some Christian thinkers. This can be seen in his review-essay on Reinhold Niebuhr which he published in *The Reconstructionist* in December, 1945. Though impressed with the brilliance of the famous Protestant thinker, he had two criticisms: First, in Niebuhr's insistence that men can never escape the taint and corruption of self love, Steinberg saw a contradiction, as many critics were later to point out, between his position as a conservative theologian and as a left-wing political thinker. Second, there was a spirit of morbidity in Niebuhr's constant emphasis on evil which made his outlook so different from that of Judaism. Drawing on his own experience with illness, Steinberg poignantly explained the difference.

Two men, let us suppose, are both affected with a chronic and always dangerous disease. One makes that circumstance the focal point of his thought and feeling. He knows all along that he has in himself elements of health, that his life situation is still enjoyable and worthwhile. His illness, however, looms most prominently in his spiritual landscape and, so, absorbs his first thought and effort. The other is fully aware of his ailment. He recognizes that he dare not forget it for an instant, or live even most fleetingly in violation of the restraints it imposes, or cease ever to hedge it in. Yet for him the most conspicuous feature of his being is not this, grave as it is. He is, therefore, likely to get along better as patient to his physician, as laborer, as kinsman, as citizen, certainly as a companion to others who, in like case with him, travel the road by his side. . . .

Steinberg felt that Niebuhr's view was too much like the melancholia of the first man; historic Judaism was characterized by the cheer of the second man. With some of the same optimism which had characterized him in the past, he reiterated his view: "Of course, there's evil in the world," he wrote, "terrible evil. It's a riddle and a challenge. But the ultimate fact is God. That doesn't mean that we have to be pollyanna

about it, but neither ought we be nervous Nellies.”<sup>28</sup> Though he admitted the presence of evil in man, he still believed that there was no aspect of life which could not be mended.

In the depths of man's heart burns a moral will, and hedging it in are all the barriers thrown up by indolence and evil habit. For the individual spirit these walls inside him may be as formidable as the walls of outer circumstance for a group, and he has a shorter time to work out his destiny. But the walls within, like the walls without, are creatures of time and subject to change. If, then, only the pressure of spirit continues, any next moment may bring what has so long been denied—a breakthrough.<sup>29</sup>

If one breakthrough is possible, Steinberg said, any number of breakthroughs are also possible. “With each penetration the breach becomes wider and wider until it is a broad avenue through which the spirit marches effortlessly.”<sup>30</sup>

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Steinberg did not live long enough fully to expose his thought. His essays, therefore, leave many questions unanswered, insights undeveloped and ambiguities unexplained. In spite of this, his theological writings are still very much worth reading and studying. They remind us of the overly practical bent of American Judaism and of the need for philosophical reflection in religion. As a sophisticated religious thinker, sensitive to philosophical issues, he raised at least some of the questions essential for the development of an acceptable theism. For those still in search of a rational theology, his plea that reason not be abandoned in the theological enterprise continues to be a source of encouragement and stimulation. At the same time, his emphasis on the centrality of faith, his constantly reiterated belief that spirit reigns supreme over nature and human affairs, represents an equally relevant message.

Just before the completion of this article, the writer paid a visit to Steinberg's grave on a hilltop in Mount Hope Cemetery in Westchester. At close range the words which his wife had had engraved on the stone—“Faith and Reason”—though somewhat faded, can still be seen. But the surrounding foliage had covered over the word “Reason” and from the distance all one could see was the word “Faith.” In the end, Steinberg was essentially a religious Jew whose aim was to teach the lessons of faith. The words which, in his novel, he put into the mouth of Rabbi Johanan, the son of Zacai, remained the motto of his own life: “There is no Truth without Faith. There is no Truth unless first there be a Faith on which it may be based.”<sup>31</sup>

28. Milton Steinberg, letter to Arthur Cohen, May 11, 1947.

29. *A Believing Jew*, pp. 223-224.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-226.

31. *As a Driven Leaf* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co.) p. 13.



# *Hebrew Is a Must in Jewish Education*

MAX ZELDNER

FROM TIME TO TIME, IN THE PAST, WE HAVE heard the voices of Jewish educators on the impracticality of teaching the Hebrew language to any meaningful extent in our afternoon schools. Now, again, we hear directors, educators and leaders in the field of Jewish education assert that, "Given the limited hours available, Sunday and afternoon schools should critically reconsider *cutting down* their focus on the Hebrew language."

Strange, that such an assertion should come at a time when even Reform religious schools are adding time and increasing their courses in the study of Hebrew. Puzzling, when we are witnessing the extraordinary growth of Hebrew all-day schools, close to 500 of them in the United States and Canada, in which 92,000 children receive their Jewish education in Hebrew. Such an education involves many parents in an extra financial burden, but their conviction seems to be, and growing ever more positive, that a fundamental, meaningful Jewish education can be obtained only through the original Hebrew sources, as Jews were educated throughout the centuries. The parents may themselves be typically secularist, universalist, middle-class America, but they now, nonetheless, want their children to be inculcated with values and a sense of identity through their Hebrew studies. The youngsters, then, will be studying the Five Books of Moses, the Prophets, the Mishnah and, in later years, the Hebrew-Aramaic Talmud, the Hebrew poets of the efflorescent Spanish period and the renascent modern Hebrew literature of Eastern Europe and Israel.

A Jewish education is, obviously, for Jews. And Jews, whatever their particular affiliation—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, or none at all—will, at one time or another—on Sabbath, a holiday, or some special occasion—attend a synagogue or temple service and be exposed to Hebrew prayers. Though there are generally translations available, the full meaning, with its peculiar qualities and all that has been associated with those prayers throughout the long tragic history of the Jewish people, will be lost, and what usually remains will be but a mechanical, stereotyped recitation of some ancient formulistic ritual.

The heartbeat of a hundred generations of those who prayed in Hebrew is in the *Shema*, the *Amidah*, the *Hallel*, the *U'netaneh Tokef*, to mention but a few. "We pray in Hebrew because it is in Hebrew alone that

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those associations, historical and religious, are present—that the unity of Jewry everywhere is maintained.”<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, whoever must depend on translation sees only as one looking at a distorting mirror; he cannot comprehend the full intent of the original, for language is the expression of the heart and the soul. The Italian saying regarding translation goes even so far as declaring, *traduttori traditori* (“translators are traitors”).

But, argue many, and some even quote the Talmud (*Berakhot*, 13a), the *Shema* may be recited in any language. However, one must also realize that the Hebrew word *shema*, like the French *entendre*, means both “hear” and “understand.” And since most Jews recite the *Shema* in the original Hebrew of the Bible (Deut. 6:4), it is, therefore, incumbent upon them to understand the Hebrew words. Furthermore, even though Jews may read the Bible in translation, they are, nevertheless, instructed to read the Scriptural portion of the week twice in Hebrew, and once in *Targum*, in translation (*Targum* is the traditional Aramaic, Onkelos’ version of the Scriptures). However, during the regular synagogue service, the Bible is always read in Hebrew, and so is the *Haftarah* (the chapter from the Prophets), even though very few worshippers may understand the meaning of the Torah reading.

The Sages of the Talmud expressed their disapproval, and very forcefully, of the Greek translation (Septuagint) of the Five Books of Moses, in the third century B.C.E., by declaring that the day when the Torah was translated into Greek was as harmful to Israel as the day when the Golden Calf was made, because the Torah could not be translated satisfactorily (*Sofrim* I, 7). Judaism-in-translation is but a surrogate, a poor substitute for Judaism in Hebrew. Bialik put it aptly when he compared the reading of the Bible in translation to kissing one’s sweetheart through a veil.

The Jewish people felt instinctively that reading the Hebrew texts in translation is not enough. They felt, as the Zionist leader and writer, Vladimir Jabotinsky, once wrote, that in order to tie our children to their people we must teach them the Hebrew language. For our continued national existence, the “*language is the essence, the content is secondary.*” To be sure, they are both important, but the indispensable tie, the strong link between the individual and his people is the language.<sup>2</sup>

Even Abraham Geiger (1810-74), German Reform rabbi and Bible critic, “far removed as he was, by the trend of his ideas, from recognizing the value of Hebrew . . . as the national language, was forced to confess that Hebrew works of scholarship or general literature are much more highly valued by the people, and retain its affection and respect much

1. Rabbi Dr. Leo Jung, in his introduction to *Festival Prayers* (New York: The Jewish Center, 1953).

2. Ze’ev Jabotinsky, *Golah ve-Hitbolelut* (Tel Aviv: Saltzman, 1936), pp. 298-99.

longer than books on the Jews and Judaism written in other languages.”<sup>3</sup> Thus it is that Jewish literary works written in Hebrew survived and remained in the treasure house of Jewish literature and formed links in the golden chain of Jewish literature from the Bible to Agnon.

And to quote the late Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, Dr. J. H. Hertz: “Hebrew is Israel’s historic language and the key to all Israel’s treasures. . . . Every Jewish child is entitled to the possession of an intimate . . . knowledge of the Sacred Tongue. . . . A Hebrew-less Jewry has no future, because it cannot fairly be said to have a present.”<sup>4</sup> And the best time to begin the study of Hebrew (and, for that matter, any other language) is early in life. Modern language authorities would agree with the Sage of the Talmud who said: If one learns when he is young, it is like ink written on new paper; if one learns when he is old, it is like ink written on blotted paper.

The national Jewish literature is, of course, a literature written in Hebrew, “for body and soul are one, and the Hebrew language is the natural and inevitable vesture of Hebraic thought.”<sup>5</sup> This had been realized by Maimonides when he used Hebrew for his monumental opus, *Mishneh Torah* (Code of Jewish Law, divided in 14 books, containing the whole of Jewish jurisprudence, religious, civil and criminal), although he wrote his other words in Arabic. Regarding his writings in Arabic, Maimonides once said with regret to his son: “My son, I realize that I have sinned against my people, and I pray to God that He might favor me to enable me to return the spoil to its rightful owner and translate my books into the Holy Tongue.”

Jews have written important works in many languages, and many Jews have become famous in world literature, though not in the national literature of their people. Thus, Jewish literature does not include Heine’s love poems or Brandes’ critical essays, or Miller’s plays. The national literature of a nation is only that which is written in its own national language. Heine is, therefore, part of German literature, Proust is part of French literature, Pasternak is part of Russian literature, and Bellow is part of American literature.

To say, as many Jewish educators do, that “the time spent on Hebrew undercuts other critical concerns, such as the teaching of ethics, values, concepts,” is manifestly erroneous. As far as the teaching of *ethics*, in the course of Jewish education, is concerned, what better source than the Hebrew Bible that has had a decisive influence in the molding of ethics, righteousness and justice in world culture and civilization? The Five Books of Moses and the Prophets are saturated with commands, demands, exhortations to ethical conduct and moral values—individual and

3. Aḥad Ha’am, *Selected Essays*, tr. by Leon Simon (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1912), pp. 253-305.

4. Dr. J. H. Hertz, ed., *The Pentateuch* (London: Soncino Press, 1971), p. 926.

5. Leon Simon, “Introduction” to *Selected Essays* (of Aḥad Ha’am), p. 35.

social. The Talmud, in addition, contains a separate, small tractate *Avot*, known as "Ethics of the Fathers," which has also been incorporated in most Prayer Books and is recited and studied on the long Saturday afternoons during the summer. In this modest tractate we find such ethical teachings, values and ideals as: Keep aloof from a bad neighbor. Do not associate with an evil man. Do not judge your fellow man until you have been in his situation. Judge all men favorably. Greed, evil desire and hatred shorten a man's life. One good deed leads to another; one misdeed leads to another. Let your friend's honor be as dear to you as your own.

From but a few examples out of a multitude, one can readily perceive the importance, if only for the richness of the ethical implications, of knowing the original Hebrew words or expressions in their manifold meanings, associations and allusions that are not revealed by the usual translation. Thus, the Hebrew word, *zedakah*, is translated as "charity." But the word also stands for fairness, merit, piety, good deeds, and is related to *zedek* ("justice, righteousness") and *zaddik* ("a just man, a pious man, an honest man"), and when used in many of the phrases found in the Bible and in post-Biblical literature, the term has still other connotations.

The Hebrew word *mizvah* is translated as "commandment," as in *Bar Mizvah* ("a son of the commandment"). But *mizvah* also means an obligation, a law, a religious duty, a meritorious deed. Combined with other Hebrew words, it gives us additional meanings, values, and concepts. Thus, *mizvat aseh* means a positive commandment, a positive law, "do," and *mizvat lo ta'aseh* gives us the reverse, a prohibitory law, a ban, "don't." In this manner, the Jewish Sages divided the 613 commandments of the Torah into 248 positive laws, "do's" and 365 prohibitory laws, "don'ts." And there is the popular expression *mizvah goreret mizvah* ("one good turn deserves another"), and the well-known saying, *sheluhai mizvah einan nizokin* ("an errand of mercy is its own protection"), and many other ethical values derived from the original Hebrew.

The common Hebrew word used when meeting or departing, known also to many non-Jews, is *shalom* ("peace"). However, the word contains many other concepts and connotations. It also signifies well-being, welfare, health, contentment, comfort, success, and, when used with the word *bayit* ("house, home"), in *sh'lom-bayit*, conveys the idea of "domestic happiness, harmony."

To cite one more example of the value and indispensability of knowing the original Hebrew term and the inadequacy of mere translation, let us consider the widely known *kiddush* ("sanctification"), as it is commonly used for the ceremonial blessing over wine that is recited on Sabbaths and holidays. This word is related to the word *kadosh* ("holy, saint, martyr"), and when used with the term *Ha-Shem* ("the Name, God"), in the expression *Kiddush Ha-Shem* ("sanctification of the Holy Name"), it may mean "martyrdom" and also any action reflecting honorably on the Jewish people and Judaism. Its Hebrew converse, with the word *hillul*

("profanation"), is *hillul Ha-Shem* ("profanation of the Name"), and implies "blasphemy" or any action reflection dishonor on Jews or Judaism. Another interesting related term is *kiddushin*. This is the Hebrew concept, value and significance for what we call "marriage."

There are a number of other significant Hebrew terms which I offer without translation, which can be appreciated and understood in their varied meanings and subtle overtones only when learned in the context of their original sources: *Hesed*, *pikkuah nefesh*, *teshuvah*, *Torah lishmah*, *halakhah*, *derekh erez*, *Shulhan Arukh*, *kabbalah*, *shekhinah*, *aliyah*, *kavanah*; and a few acronyms: *Bilu*, *Habad*, *Nili*.

No mere translation can possibly express all of the cultural and concealed meanings rooted in the Hebrew language. And if that is true of single words or phrases, it is so much more so when we read the Hebrew Prayer Book, the *Siddur*, that anthology of magnificent selections from the Bible, and Mishnah, the Talmud and post-Biblical works. No translation could evoke the same historical associations, cultural allusions, and national feelings as the original Hebrew.

Indeed, the link with previous Jewish generations has always been forged largely through Jewish rituals, Hebrew blessings, the Hebrew Bible, the Hebrew Prayer Book. And although throughout their long history Jews have spoken other languages—Aramaic, Greek, Persian, Arabic or Yiddish—Hebrew was always the language taught and the texts were the Bible, with Rashi's commentary, the Mishnah, Midrash, and the Hebrew rabbinical and scholarly works of the later periods. And no matter what the particular language of the country of their domicile happened to be, Jews used Hebrew words, phrases, concepts; and in Hebrew they composed their prayers, their lamentations, their liturgical hymns. As Dr. Solomon Schechter once wrote:

the use of the sacred language was, among the Jews, not confined to the sacred literature. They wrote in it their letters, kept in it their accounts, and composed in it their love-songs and wine-songs. All legal documents, such as leases, contracts, marriage settlements, and letters of divorce, and the proceedings as well as the decisions of the courts of justice, were drawn up in Hebrew, or, at least, written in Hebrew letters.<sup>6</sup>

Imbedded in the Hebrew language are national experiences, desires, hopes, yearnings, nostalgia, images, visions. These Hebrew expressions have stirred the hearts and moved the spirits of countless Jews throughout the ages. The Hebrew language was always a tower of strength for the Jew and in it he poured out his innermost feelings to his Creator.

To cite Schechter once again,

The Hebrew language is the great depository of all that is best in the soul-life of the Congregation of Israel. Without it we will become severed from the

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6. Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism*, 2nd series (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1908), pp. 2-3.

great Tree which is life unto those that cling to it. Hellenistic Judaism (the Greek-speaking Jewish community of antiquity, especially Alexandria, Egypt) is the only one known to history which dared to make this experiment of dispensing with the Sacred Language. The result was death. It withered away and terminated in total and wholesale apostasy from Judaism.<sup>7</sup>

There is also this very crucial problem, to wit: If our children do not begin their Hebrew studies at an early age and continue it through adolescence, where will we get the hundreds of instructors needed to fill positions in Judaica-Hebraica in American universities? Who will teach in the numerous Sunday, afternoon, and all-day Hebrew schools? The kind of courses now offered under the rubric of "Jewish Studies" in many colleges and universities, such as "History of the Jews in the Middle Ages," "Jewish Problems," "Sociology of Jewish Life," and similar courses, do not include the study of the Hebrew language and literature. Such studies, therefore, will not produce a single teacher even for an elementary Hebrew class. Could one pursue, for example, a program in German studies without a knowledge of the German language, or receive a Ph.D. in French studies without proficiency in French? Yet, it seems, one can complete a major in Jewish studies without being able to read so much as a Hebrew sentence, let alone an article, or a document, or a book.

"It is very painful for us to suggest," declare some of those advocating cutting down the hours given to the study of Hebrew, "that Hebrew, the central language of prayer and tradition, should be cut—but it is realistic. What should be substituted is a trip or a summer in Israel."

Painful, indeed! Tragic, in fact! If the Jewish people had used this kind of reasoning, this chimerical understanding of "realism," the question, "Is Hebrew a must in Jewish education?" would long, long ago have ceased to exist as there would not be any Jews left. And to substitute for the Hebrew Prayer Book and for all the other books created in Hebrew in the three millennia of Jewish history, "a trip or a summer in Israel" is the height of fallacy. There are hundreds of young Gentiles from Europe, Asia, Africa, making trips to Israel and staying there for a summer, and they even learn to speak some Hebrew. Are they receiving a Jewish education? If we *add* "a trip or a summer in Israel" to the studies in the time-honored Hebrew sources, well and good, but not *instead*.

Consequently, we must endeavor to *increase*, not limit, the hours available in the Jewish schools and "to critically reconsider" how to *enlarge* "their focus on the Hebrew language." This approach, the *strengthening* of the Hebrew program, will, therefore, make the significant original resources of Judaism throughout the ages accessible to all our children and thus help assure Jewish survival and the continuity of Jewish creativity.

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7. Solomon Schechter, in *A Book of Jewish Thoughts*, selected and arranged by J. H. Hertz (New York: Bloch Publishing Co., 1945), p. 15.

# *The Man of Dialogue and the Man of Halakhah*

RUTH BIRNBAUM

IN THE NEVER-ENDING QUEST FOR THE human/divine encounter, modern Jewish thinkers have offered numerous existential avenues for the realization of this goal, each one nurtured and drawing deeply from the same wellsprings of salvation. Among these thinkers, two eminent ones come into focus by reason of the polarity of their positions on the means to attain this redemptive end. Martin Buber and Joseph B. Soloveitchik both beckon us along the path of salvation, but their arrows point in different directions. Buber's way is through an untrammelled path and an openness to the *I-Thou* relationship characterized by spontaneity, immediacy, and unconditionality. Halakhah, with its absorbing attention to precepts and minute ritual, subtracts from this spontaneity and impedes the human-divine encounter. "Buber denies any direct connection between revelation and the tradition of binding legal institutions and rites which regulate Jewish life, private or public."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, Soloveitchik, the revered traditionalist Rav, asserts that precisely through halakhah man is brought near to God. "Nearness to God' is reached through a life of total dedication to the apprehension and fulfillment of His will. It is this which halakhah offers, and imposes upon the Jew."<sup>2</sup> The corpus of laws are the sacred signposts which light the way to the spiritual ascent.

It would appear, therefore, that the element of halakhah is regarded by these religious thinkers as being respectively the alienating or redeeming factor in the human-divine encounter. Yet, despite their unyielding positions on this issue, it bears noting that both borrowed from behind the self-circumscribed curtain that special dialectical feature which gave impetus to their respective ideas. Buber was influenced by the vitality of Hasidism which hallows the law in everyday life, by the passionate involvement of the Hasid with the here and now, and by his joyous fulfillment of the divine commandments.<sup>3</sup> Soloveitchik, explicating Jewish theology within the fixed structures of halakhah, exercises creative options using the currency of Buber's existential expressions<sup>4</sup> to yield incan-

1. Franz Rosenzweig, *On Jewish Learning*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), p. 21.

2. Aharon Lichtenstein, "R. Joseph Soloveitchik," in *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Simon Noveck (B'nai Brith Books, 1963), p. 289.

3. Buber viewed with reservation the mediating agency of the Zaddik. See his "Jewish Religiosity," in *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), p. 83.

4. Eugene Borowitz comments that "... without Buber it would not be possible for modern man to rely upon Rosenzweig. . . . [Buber] has made as clear as one is likely to be able to do

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descent meanings to old store long kept. His trenchant writings<sup>5</sup> have added intellectual luster to Orthodoxy's contribution to religious-philosophic ideas. As Lou H. Silberman observes, however, "It is the how-ness of Soloveitchik's theology, rather than its content, that is altogether striking in contemporary Jewish thought."<sup>6</sup> These respective adoptive features by Buber and Soloveitchik thus constitute more of an embellishment to their basic postures than a determinant in their religious philosophies. The fact that they incorporate these features suggests, perhaps, that they recognize the need to adjust an otherwise skewed position.

There is an implied audaciousness in a study considering such disparate claims, especially since these religious proponents take no formal cognizance of each other in the annals and analysis of modern Jewish thought. Yet, the unique correlation of consonant, as well as conflicting, views in their writings seems to beg for the forum of open discussion. It is, therefore, the direction herein to explore how Buber, the man of dialogue, and Soloveitchik, the man of halakhah, view the purposes and meanings of revelation and its relation to Law, and to try to extract a rationale for their co-existence and concurrence within the matrix of Judaism.

The relationship of revelation to law was an issue specifically enunciated in the correspondence between Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber<sup>7</sup> in which the former criticized Buber for his rejection of the law. While Rosenzweig admits that "revelation is certainly not Law-giving,"<sup>8</sup> and that the forms and structure of law were a human response to the content of revelation, nevertheless, as Professor Nahum N. Glatzer informs us, he posits "an intimate relationship between a minute detail of Halakhah and the lofty 'I am the Lord they God'."<sup>9</sup> Rosenzweig wanted to restore to the "legal system with paragraphs"<sup>10</sup> the "living reality (*Heutigkeit*)" in which "Law (*Gesetz*) must again become commandment (*Gebet*) which seeks to be transformed into deed at the very moment it is heard."<sup>11</sup>

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the source of belief and the reason for its open, personalist texture today." ("On the COM-MENTARY Symposium: Alternatives in Creating a Jewish Apologetic," JUDAISM, XV, 4 [Fall 1966]: p. 461.)

5. There is a paucity of publications by Soloveitchik. Apparently his reluctance to publish is a trait which finds its antecedence in the traditions of his family. He himself called it a "family malady." His teachings are, for the most part, orally transmitted, but he has published two long essays, "Ish Hahalakhah," *Talpioth*, 1944, pp. 651-734, and "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition*, Summer, 1965, pp. 5-67; one shorter essay, "Confrontation," *Tradition*, Spring-Summer, 1964, pp. 5-29. ("R. Joseph Soloveitchik," by Aharon Lichtenstein, *Op. cit.*, p. 287. See also *Shiurei Harav: A Conspectus of the Public Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (New York: Hamevaser, 1974), p. 4.

6. Lou H. Silberman, "Concerning Jewish Theology in North America," *American Jewish Year Book*, 1969, p. 51.

7. "Revelation and Law: Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig," *On Jewish Learning*.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 118.

9. *On Jewish Learning*, Introduction, p. 21.

10. "Revelation and Law," p. 116.

11. "The Builders: Concerning the Law," *On Jewish Learning*, p. 85.

Rosenzweig accepted the challenge of Deuteronomy 5:3—"The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day"—to make the law, together with its accretions and extended boundaries, a living covenant.

Buber, in denying "that *revelation* is ever a formulation of law,"<sup>12</sup> defends his position by the evidence of the *I-Thou* Sinaitic experience. If

he who explained his position with the words, "I stood between the Lord and you" (Deuteronomy 5:5) could, after having said, "I am the Lord thy God," continue only with, "Thou shalt have no other gods," . . . (then from) the fact that they and I had to be told this . . . from this idea I have to be redeemed.

Buber thus suggests that the Second Commandment disavows, by its very utterance, the existential reality and content of the revelation. The unmediated encounter *sui generis* was an apodictic declaration of the uniqueness and unity of the wholly Other. This, indeed, was the quintessence of the revelation. What followed, therefore, in the Second Commandment was, for Buber, no longer of the essence of revelation, but a human-mediated reinforcement of the pristine experience. "It is this fact," he says, "which explains why I cannot accept the laws and the statutes blindly, but I must ask myself again and again: Is this particular law addressed to me and rightly so?"<sup>13</sup>

This position of Buber's was adumbrated in his early addresses<sup>14</sup> wherein he distinguishes between religiosity and religion. Here, in closer agreement with Franz Rosenzweig, he defines religiosity as the creative, active element in which the individual breaks through his conditioned being to the Unconditional to imbue the yoke of the laws with new meanings. In this existential sphere Torah is rendered as "teaching." In contrast, he defines religion as the uncreative, passive and preservative aspects of Judaism in which rites and dogmas are rigidly observed without the spiritual effects of self-renewal. These religionists, says Buber, are the "blind followers of the law who demand that it be accepted not out of certitude of its divine origin but out of obedience to the authority of the collective Jewish will."<sup>15</sup> They find "holy security" in the ritualistic performance of the law. Thus, instead of bringing man nearer to God, the practices congeal into a hedge of inertia shutting out the possibility of experiencing an immediacy with the Divine Being.

Mediating between these two areas of religiosity and religion is the man who is unqualifiedly certain that the Torah, as law, is of the very essence and content of revelation. To him, the law has universal validity.

12. "Revelation and Law," p. 111.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

14. "Jewish Religiosity," *On Judaism*, p. 80.

15. "Herut: On Youth and Religion," *On Judaism*, p. 166.

"The legitimacy of the life of the man whose observance of the law is grounded on this basis is unassailable, the legitimacy of what, to him, is truth, irrefutable."<sup>16</sup> His acceptance of the law is authentic and beyond criticism.

From this standpoint it might be argued that Buber's repudiation of halakhah<sup>17</sup> is not a categorical rejection, but a personal response. To live authentically, he contends, "I cannot admit the law transformed by man into the realm of my will, if I am to hold myself ready as well for the unmediated word of God directed to a specific hour of Life."<sup>18</sup> What is primary here is not merely whether halakhah as a binding authority is part of revelation itself, but whether the individual observing halakhah does so as a response to an existential choice in which he finds himself so addressed.

Soloveitchik finds himself singularly so addressed!

The prime purpose of revelation in the opinion of halakhah is related to the giving of the Law. The God-man confrontation serves a didactic goal. . . . The halakhah has looked upon God since time immemorial as the teacher par excellence. . . . In short, God's word is ipso facto God's law and norm.<sup>19</sup>

Whereas, for Soloveitchik, the teaching of God is bound up with the law of God, Buber separates these two realms of teaching and law. For the man of dialogue, teaching is the incompleting creative process in Judaism by which the individual actualizes his religious consciousness in word and deed. Law, on the other hand, is validated in living observance only if, in the eyes of the believer, it is received into his innermost being as the content of the Sinaitic experience. "Though man is a law-receiver, God is not a law-giver."<sup>20</sup> Buber decries the tendency to hypostatize the law into a self-sustaining ethic, thereby uprooting it from its moorings of primal utterances.

Having established the basic distinction herein between revelation-as-teaching and revelation-as-law, it might be well to consider how this difference either helps or hinders man in bringing him nearer to God.

As existentialists par excellence, both religious philosophers argue for the authentic life. To live in an intimate relation with God is to live in the integrity and unification of the soul. The best of all possible human conditions is achieved and apprehended by each of them as a corollary to his formula of revelation-as-teaching or of revelation-as-law.

Buber declares that only in the area of living religiosity where man is

16. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

17. Halakhah and law are interchangeably used here and refer to "the sum of all the statutes, preserved at first in unwritten form but later committed to writing that God, according to tradition, gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai, within the hearing of the assembled people of Israel. (*Ibid.*, p. 164.)

18. "Revelation and Law," p. 111.

19. "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 40.

20. "Revelation and Law," p. 115.

pellucidly receptive to the divine word may he attain to a wholeness of his being.

No man knows the abyss of inner dualism so well as the Jew, but neither does anyone know so well the miracle of unification, which cannot be accepted on faith but must be experienced. Therefore, nothing already realized can ever suffice, but only the act that starts anew with every human being: realization.<sup>21</sup>

For Buber, “this is the true realm of unity, the realm where man, in every other respect still divided, split apart, and torn by conflict, may at any moment become whole and one.”<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, there can be no commitment to Jewish teaching which is conceived of as something finished and inexorable. To be sure, in order for Judaism to exist as a community of men and for men to maintain themselves in a religious community, religiosity needs forms. But when religion keeps

men tied to an immutable law and damns their demand for freedom; . . . when, instead of keeping its elemental sweep inviolate, it transforms the law into a heap of petty formulas and allows man’s decision for right or wrong action to degenerate into hairsplitting casuistry—then religion no longer shapes but enslaves religiosity.<sup>23</sup>

According to Buber, this suppression of the spirit finds expression in two directions: as a periodic eruption and rebellious surge for freedom, as manifested in Messianic movements, or, more constructively, in the spiritual infusion and awakening generated by new shoots of Jewish mysticism. (This latter development found its way into early Hasidism to create a resurgence of living Jewish religiosity.)

For Soloveitchik, trained as he is in the consistency of logic, it does not surprise us that the condition of man emerges as a hobgoblin of inconsistencies. And, indeed, his treatises are literary anatomizations carving out segments of conflicting human impulses and strivings. He maintains that the paradoxes of the soul and the dilemmas of the human spirit are assigned to man by God and are comprehended and provided for in halakhah.

Having received his principles and laws at Sinai, [the Jew] comes equipped with “a body of teaching which points out to him the way to the nature of being. There is no phenomenon, event or thing which a priori Halacha does not approach with its measurements.”

21. “Jewish Religiosity,” p. 82. See the *New York Times Book Review*, April 14, 1968, p. 7, “The Man Who Passed Through Gateways,” by Martin Marty, who quotes this same passage, adding: “These words in ‘On Judaism’ were over 50 years old when he died, but he could also have put them into his last testament.”

22. “Herut,” pp. 166, 170.

23. “Jewish Religiosity,” pp. 91-92.

24. “The Lonely Man of Faith,” pp. 10, 54, 55.

25. *Talpioth*, 1944, p. 661, as reported in *Guideposts in Modern Judaism*, by Jacob B. Agus

Since man is not an orderly, rational being, he needs the divinely ordered discipline of halakhah to guide him along the path to realization. For the halakhic individual the agony of choice is considerably tempered by the directives of the law. Halakhah, with its "fixed and lucid molds in clearly outlined laws and definite principles,"<sup>26</sup> is God-given to man as a blueprint of instruction for his redemption. Unification begins with his submission to the laws and ends in the experience of the Divine Presence. It is through the rigors of halakhah that man becomes master of himself and, thus, achieves freedom. The nature of this freedom, however, is tied to the teleology of halakhah which "manifests itself exactly in the paradoxical yet magnificent dialect underlying the Halakhic gesture."<sup>27</sup> Here, drawing from Kierkegaard and Heidegger, Soloveitchik describes man's role as oscillating between the covenantal community of faith and the majestic community of worldliness. At the moment when man wants to maintain an absolute relationship with the Absolute, he is required to participate with other men in this and that.<sup>28</sup> At the moment when man wants to be in solitude, halakhah pushes him into solicitous being with others.<sup>29</sup>

Moreover, although halakhah rejects the unconscious gesture, there is, nevertheless, justification for the view that

the most legalistic ritualism is better than no worship whatever; and the individual who, within *Halakhah*, lapses into a formalistic rut, would very likely be bereft of religious awareness completely were he without it.<sup>30</sup>

To this allegation, and as if in direct response, Buber counters:

We reject this dialectic completely. In the image of man to which we aspire, conviction and volition, personality and performance, are one and indivisible.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, rejoins the halakhist, ritual at the very least provides a substratum of conduct for the religionist and, at the very most, it leads man to the loftiest spiritual heights.

It would appear, therefore, regarding the dialogic focus on

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(New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954), p. 39. See also "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 52, footnote.

26. *Talpioth*, p. 688, as reported in *Guideposts in Modern Judaism*, p. 40.

27. "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 50.

28. "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 50. Cf. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, tr. by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 365. Compare Soloveitchik's statements as follows: "... man who is at the same time the free messenger of God and His captive as well." "Man assumes the great burden which is the price he pays for this encounter with God." ("The Lonely Man ..." p. 41 fn. and p. 48) with Kierkegaard's statement: "Whoever rubs the wonderful lamp of freedom becomes himself a servant" to God. (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 124).

29. "The Lonely Man ..." p. 50. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962), p. 344.

30. *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, p. 294.

31. "Herut," p. 166.

revelation-as-teaching, and the halakhic focus on revelation-as-law, that operationally there is no reconciliation in their respective positions, nor is there conclusive evidence, within the limits imposed by this study, to determine the superior means of achieving the redemptive realization. This of course does not thereby deny the awareness and existence of other alternatives with respect to the law. Where Buber looks for subjectivity, the man of halakhah “converts subjectivity into objectivity.”<sup>32</sup> Where Buber urges openness to continuing revelation, Soloveitchik posits an historical revelation transmitted in its entirety and binding for all time. Thus, each one is encamped upon Mt. Gerizim looking out on Mt. Ebal and uttering the Biblical imprecations.

Because of their extreme positions on the law, both have their partisans and their detractors. As Milton Himmelfarb observes, in evaluating the responses to the COMMENTARY Symposium, “the true division is between the Orthodox and non-Orthodox.”<sup>33</sup> Buber’s unorthodox philosophy has come under heavy criticism by his co-religionists,<sup>34</sup> who, pointing at his irreverence for Rabbinic law, accuse him of antinomianism, of “dangerous glorification of subjective feeling at the expense of the objective content of actions.”<sup>35</sup> Buber responds that “without law, that is, without any clear-cut and transmissible line of demarcation between that which is pleasing to God and that which is displeasing to Him, there can be no historical continuity of divine rule upon earth.”<sup>36</sup> He urges studying all Jewish teachings so that the individual will be open to the greatest enlightenment in his dialogic encounter.

For the most part, Buber’s theology has been universalized out of its Jewish matrix and his ideas have served to fertilize non-Jewish fields. Says Silberman, commenting on the absence of Buber’s influence on the symposium:

The influence of Buber on Protestant and, to a lesser degree, Roman Catholic thought while Jewish thinkers continued to disregard him, was somewhat more than a minor scandal in the face of his determinedly Jewish provenance and the undeniable fact that he was speaking to the situation of the Jew.<sup>37</sup>

Eugene Borowitz, however, argues that Buber’s dialogic philosophy

32. *Talpioth*, 1944, p. 688, as reported in *Guideposts*, p. 40. See also “The Lonely Man of Faith,” p. 35.

33. *The Condition of Jewish Belief: A Symposium Compiled by the Editors of Commentary Magazine* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), p. 1.

34. Reference here is to Arthur A. Cohen, *The Natural and the Supernatural Jew* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), pp. 165 ff; Gershom Scholem, “Martin Buber’s Interpretation of Hasidism”, in *The Messianic Idea of Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 245; Malcolm Diamond, *Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 161-172.

35. Maurice S. Friedman, *Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959), p. 263.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 263.

37. “Concerning Jewish Theology in North America,” p. 41.

has become so much a part of contemporary Jewish thought that the very fact that he is not referred to explicitly is cogent evidence for the way his ideas have infiltrated Jewish theology:

Because Buber's image of the I-Thou has been accepted by many thinkers in the modern world, the modern Jew can speak of faith and even Revelation with substantial integrity. Moreover Buber clarifies the Jewishness of our commitment. . . . Buber created the modern meaning of Covenant, the relationship between the people of Israel and its God, the unique social parallel to what takes place between individuals and God.<sup>38</sup>

Where no admiring epithets attach to Buber, Soloveitchik is acknowledged affectionately as "The Rav," and is the revered mentor of thousands of students in the Orthodox community. His creative way of explicating theology from the Bible has appealed to, and revitalized, contemporary Orthodox thought.<sup>39</sup> Where Buber's contribution to Jewish thought—and it is substantial—is largely overlooked and somewhat scorned, Soloveitchik is respected, nay commended, for his utilization of secular philosophic sources. He is brought to task, however, by Jacob B. Agus when he attempts to inject novelty into the framework of the closed a priori world of halakhah. Soloveitchik calls upon each person to engage in the creative process of self-renewal in accordance with the ideal pattern of the prophet, until he achieves the readiness to receive Divine Grace.<sup>40</sup> Says Agus:

As to Halachah, its very nature as a rationally ordered system of law precluded the disturbing intervention of prophecy, so that the growth of Halachah, following the reforms of Ezra, narrowed the range of prophecy and eventually eliminated it altogether, save as part of the Messianic hope. Well-known is the historic debate between Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanos and Rabbi Joshua ben Hananyah, when the latter refused to accept heavenly signs and testimonies, saying, "The Torah is not in heaven" (*Baba M'tzia* 59a).<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Agus claims,

Dr. Soloveitchik brings in through the back door what he has previously expelled through the front door, characterizing all efforts to experience the immediacy of the Divine Being as the dark vagaries of romanticism and the dangerous dynamism of mysticism.<sup>42</sup>

Understandably, Soloveitchik wants the best of both worlds. He would like to sow in the fields of spontaneity and reap in the precedented world of halakhic security.

38. Borowitz, "On the *Commentary* Symposium," JUDAISM, (Fall, 1966): 461.

39. "Concerning Jewish Theology in North America," pp. 52-53.

40. *Talpioth*, 1944, p. 729.

41. *Guideposts*, p. 42.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 44.



Despite the polarity of positions between the man of dialogue and the man of halakhah, when the paper money of ideas is cashed in for the medium of existence, it becomes possible to bridge the Sinaitic communication gap between them. What appears, in theory, as an open and closed issue is not so conclusive when the inquiry is translated into living reality. For example, they both express a tendency towards a more benign blending of their extreme positions. Says Buber, "the older I become, and the more I realize the restlessness of my soul, the more I accept for myself the Day of Rest."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Soloveitchik, in the mellowed maturity of his career, places increasing emphasis on the emotional element in Judaism drawing from Hasidic, Kabbalistic and contemporary sources.<sup>44</sup>

Existentially, where commitment becomes a living ethos, and the crustations of the Tribe disappear, there is much evidence to point to a dialogic détente between Buber and Soloveitchik.<sup>45</sup> In fact, there is a temptation to recast Soloveitchik's classifications into Buberian molds, as demonstrated by the following examples. In the majestic utilitarian community of Adam the first, and in the covenantal faith community of Adam the second, explicated by Soloveitchik in "The Lonely Man of Faith," we hear resounding echoes of Buber's *I-It* and *I-Thou* attitudes. Says Soloveitchik:

While Adam the first is dynamic and creative [aesthetically] transforming sense data into thought constructs, Adam the second is receptive and beholds the world in its original dimensions. He looks for the image of God not in the mathematical formula or the natural relational law but in every beam of light, in every bud and blossom, in the morning breeze and the stillness of a starlit evening. In a word, Adam the second explores not the scientific abstract universe, but the irresistibly fascinating qualitative world where he establishes an intimate relation with God.<sup>46</sup>

A similar comparison is apparent in the following excerpt from "Confrontation" where Soloveitchik, describing the third level of man as a confrontation, not of subject-object, but of two equal subjects, comes very close to paraphrasing Buber's *I-Thou* relationship:

... two equal subjects, both lonely in their otherness and uniqueness, both opposed and rejected by an objective order, both craving for companionship. This confrontation is reciprocal, not unilateral. This time the two confronters stand alongside each other, each admitting the existence of the other. An aloof existence is transformed into a together-existence. ... Two individuals, lonely and helpless in their solitude, meet, and the first community is formed. ... two fenced-in and isolated human existences open up, and they both ecstatically break through to each other. ... The word brings

43. "Revelation and Law," p. 115.

44. *Great Jewish Thinkers of the Twentieth Century*, p. 296; Shiurei Harav, p. 3.

45. Eugene Borowitz also expresses his awareness, without elaborating, of the correlation of ideas between Buber and Soloveitchik. See Eugene B. Borowitz, "The Typological Theology of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik," JUDAISM, XV, 2 (Spring 1966), 207.

46. "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 17.

out not only what is common in two existences but the singularity and uniqueness of each existence as well.<sup>47</sup>

In Soloveitchik's covenantal community, however, the *I-Thou* is extended to the I, Thou and He. For both existentialists, nevertheless, God is the hyphen who cements relationships between individuals and charges them with an ethical-moral mission.

In disposing oneself to the human-divine encounter, it is possible to find further parallel expressions between the man of dialogue and the man of halakhah:

God's grace consists precisely in this, that He wants to let Himself be won by man, that He places Himself, so to speak, into man's hands. God wants to come to His world, but He wants to come to it through man. . . . Grace is God's answer to man.<sup>48</sup>

The initiative, says the *Halakhah*, belongs to man; the successful realization to God. . . . The Lord wants man to undertake the task which He, in His infinite grace, completes.<sup>49</sup>

Like Abraham, who in his spiritual quest searched out the Eternal Thou, the relation is choosing and being chosen.

While the affinities between them are substantial, it is also important to distinguish the ontological moorings of their respective subjects. In the *I-Thou* relationship of Buber, and in Soloveitchik's covenantal community, each individual maintains his uniqueness in the encounter. But, whereas for Buber, the *I* comes into being when he says *Thou*,<sup>50</sup> making the sphere of "between" a "primal category of human reality,"<sup>51</sup> for Soloveitchik, the ontology of man remains rooted in solitariness where the individual, in his utter loneliness, discovers the great "Lonely One."<sup>52</sup>

The implication of this distinction is borne out by the manner in which each conceives of his ethical-moral mission. Buber sees the relation between man and man as "the real simile of the relation with God."<sup>53</sup> Therefore, in every particular, *Thou* man glimpses through to the *Eternal Thou*. Like Jacob's ladder, the nexus to God does not float above the

47. "Confrontation," p. 14.

48. Martin Buber, *To Hallow This Life*, ed. Jacob Trapp (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 30, 34.

49. "The Lonely Man of Faith," p. 53.

50. Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, 2nd edition, tr. by Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 28.

51. Martin Buber, "What Is Man," in *Between Man and Man*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), p. 203.

52. "The Lonely Man of Faith," pp. 27, 67. Cf. Ludwig Feuerbach's statement, "The *absolute* to man is his own nature," (*The Essence of Christianity* [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957], p. 5).

53. *I and Thou*, p. 103. Eliezer Berkovitz rejects the *I-Thou* relationship as paradigmatic for the Biblical encounter on the grounds that the divine *Thou* is other than all other *thous*. (*American Jewish Year Book*, 1969, p. 45). This is precisely Buber's point. According to Buber, where it is the fate of individual *thous* to become *It*, the divine *Thou* remains a continuing revelation which cannot be set against a context of time and space.

everydayness, but has its base in this world and then ascends to eternity. Soloveitchik, however, asserts that "man must seek to fulfill his obligations before God, then he should find favor in the eyes of man."<sup>54</sup>

The consecration to infinite tasks thus returns to its pivotal interpretation of revelation-as-teaching or revelation-as-law, wherein the man of dialogue and the man of halakhah pursue their commitments as Jews with different passions. Buber, in his generation, found the path to the human-divine encounter impeded by the *tel* of halakhah and sought a breakthrough to create a renaissance of religiosity. He therefore urged the youth not to cheat their Master by copying the answer out of a book without having worked out the sum themselves,<sup>55</sup> but to attend to the homework of the soul. His words have, indeed, fomented an upsurge in religiosity. Soloveitchik himself comments on it:

Young people are more complicated religiously, more dynamic in their religious search. Moreover, they are infected with a degree of "chutzpah." They want a service which is more spontaneous and volatile, more fervent than fixed, more flexible than rigid. They are interested more in a house of study than in a house of prayer. They are alienated from scrupulous, formalized and tightly organized worship.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, Buber forges his road to Sinai remaining intensely open to "the great becoming."<sup>57</sup> He seeks *discovery* in an uncharted terrain. On the other hand, Soloveitchik follows the security of the chain of tradition embracing the dogma of halakhah with the illumination of one who has extracted the deep meanings found in the performance of its precepts. He seeks *rediscovery* within the framework of obedience.

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54. *Shiurei Harav*, p. 17.

55. *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, edited by Robert Bretall (New York: The Modern Library, Copyright 1946 by Princeton University Press), p. 19.

56. "The Synagogue as an Institution and as an Idea," *Shiurei Harav*, p. 75.

57. "Jewish Religiosity," p. 82.

# *Religious Witness In Judaism*

BEN ZION BOKSER

JUDAISM HAS INVESTED ITS ADHERENTS WITH the obligation to witness to their faith before the rest of the world, "You are my witness, says the Lord," declared Isaiah (43:10). This imperative rests on the earliest strata of religious tradition. It is regarded as a Biblical ordinance. Maimonides derived it from Lev. 22:23, which is a call to sanctify God's name. "The sense of this commandment," declared Maimonides, "is our obligation to disseminate our faith among all peoples" (Book of precepts, ninth commandment).

The specific expression which is given in any religious tradition to the duty to witness will be conditioned by the conception which that tradition has of the particularities of its established system of rite and doctrine, and by the conception that it has of parallel systems of rite and doctrine in other faiths. If it absolutizes its system and regards it as the only channel for winning acceptability to God, then witness will take the form of seeking to alienate a person from his own faith to make a formal convert out of him. Conversion will then be the only efficacious way of bringing to him the indispensable treasure on which his salvation depends. Judaism never defined its own system of rite and doctrine in such terms. It did not absolutize them and, therefore, did not seek to universalize them. It regarded them as channels of a transcendent light, as vessels containing a truth which resides in them and is cultivated through them, but that truth has a life of its own that is capable of reaching and enriching other lives outside of its own system. Only the truth which is abstracted from the forms through which it is expressed is universal and needs to be diffused through the act of witness, and this truth can enrich other lives regardless of any formal affiliation with any particular religious system.

Jewish religious tradition found its formal crystallization in the Pharisaic-rabbinic period, and one of its active concerns was to wage an active campaign to disseminate its teachings throughout the pagan world. It welcomed converts, and we have many expressions of the Pharisaic-rabbinic solicitousness that converts be made to feel at home, and that they are to be accorded a special love because of their depth of commitment in detaching themselves from ancestral roots to come "under the wings of the Shekhinah." The term, *ger*, which in Biblical Hebrew meant "stranger" was reinterpreted in rabbinic Hebrew to mean proselyte, and the Bible's thirty-six repetitions of the injunction to love the stranger were transposed into a call to love the proselyte. A special prayer was added to

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the Jewish liturgy to invoke God's blessing on righteous proselytes, and converts from all strata of Greco-Roman society joined the Jewish fold. Rabbi Elazar thought it providential that the Jewish people were dispersed among the nations, since they were then brought into greater contact with the non-Jewish world, and were more effectively able to witness to the truths of their religious teachings.

But while Judaism was open to the sincere candidate for conversion, it also recognized a category of persons, "God-fearers," who did not formally adopt Judaism, but embraced its universal teachings about God and man, who acknowledged a supreme, universal God, and a sovereign moral order which derived from Him. Sometimes these were said to be embodied in the so-called "seven Noahide commandments," including the demand to avoid idolatry, bloodshed, and cruelty to animals, and, on the positive side, the acknowledgment of a universal God and the pursuit of justice between man and man. Indeed, in some cases, Jewish missionaries sought to dissuade a would-be convert from formal initiation into Judaism. They counselled him, instead, to remain in his own household of faith but to live by the new light of the universal Jewish principles which transcended the formalism of its rites and ceremonies. Josephus reports such a case of a Jewish merchant missionary who had won the heart of Izates, a prince of the royal house of Audiabne, who was ready to take the full step of having himself circumcised as a Jew. But the missionary said to him "that he might worship God without being circumcised . . . which worship of God was of a superior nature to circumcision" (Antiquities, 20, 2,4). The rabbis formalized this concept into the teaching that the "pious among the nations have a share in the world to come." They went so far as to state that such a person is as precious in the sight of God as a High Priest in Israel.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav called such a person a convert in essence, in contradistinction to a convert in fact. Here are his words:

When we raise the conditions of our faith from its lowly state, converts come to us . . . They either become converts in fact . . . or they only become converts in essence, and within their own faith as it is, they believe in the unity of God, the Creator, praised be He. This is prophesied in the verse (Malachi 1:11), "For from the rising of the sun to its going down shall My name be great among the nations, and in every place shall incense be offered to My name."<sup>2</sup>

Maimonides made this clear in his letter to Rabbi Hisdai Halevi:

As to your question concerning the other nations, you must realize that the Torah seeks the heart, and everything depends on the intentions of the heart. Therefore did the sages of truth, our masters, peace be upon them, declare (Tosefta, Sanhedrin 13:4) that the pious (*hasidei*, but the text in the

1. *Sifra* on Leviticus, 18:5.

2. *Likutei Maharash* II,5.

Tosefta is *zadikei*, "the righteous") among the nations have a share in the world to come, if they have mastered what one can comprehend concerning the knowledge of the Creator, praised be He, and have refined their natures with sound principles of morals. There is no doubt about the matter, that whoever has perfected himself with good attributes of behavior and with sound principles of belief in the Creator, praised be He, is among those destined to have a share in the world to come.<sup>3</sup>

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, a modern religious philosopher and a chief rabbi of Jewish Palestine prior to the birth of the state of Israel, gave much thought to this problem and his writings offer a further refinement of the classic position. One of his formulations expressed it thus:

Concerning the other faiths . . . the aim of the enlightenment which emanates from Judaism is not to absorb or destroy them . . . but to perfect them and to stimulate them toward higher development so that they may free themselves of their dross, and then they will automatically be joined to the root of Israel . . . This applies even to pagan faiths, and certainly to those faiths which are in part based on the light of Israel's Torah.<sup>4</sup>

What is unique in Judaism and the core of its witness to other faiths is this conception of religious universality, which acknowledges the legitimacy of diverse paths to God, whose ideal is a fellowship of faiths in which they offer each other mutual aid in the quest for God. The dream of the prophet Zephaniah that the time will come when all people will address the Lord in "a pure language . . . and serve Him with one accord" (3:9), is to be interpreted as referring to a time when men will reach this level of religious universalism. Each faith may continue to speak to God in its own historic idiom, but if the content of its speech has transcended particularism and reached the maturity of true universalism, then we will have reached the prophetic utopia. Our speech will be pure, despite a variation in vocabulary, and we will be worshipping God in one accord, despite variations in our forms of expression.

People in our time are often astray in a wilderness of confusion. They seek to anchor life on the trivialities which abound all around them, and which lure them with their outer lustre and artificially contrived glamour. They need a light of truth which will show them the way. That light of truth is not the denominational possession of a particular faith. It is at the heart of every faith that has been illuminated by the teachings of the great seers of all the ages. It is certainly at the heart of every faith that has been illumined by that divine source of faith which is represented in our common Biblical heritage. A stress on denominationalism dulls the light. The witness to which we are all called is a shared witness for what is basic, for what Micah summed up in his famous declaration of what God wants of us: "to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

3. *Ignot u-Teshuvot, Teraklin* (Warsaw, 1927), p. 16.

4. *Igrot*, Vol. I, Letter 111.

There is a second role which religious witness has to play, and that is in the shared interaction with other faiths. Every religious tradition is exposed to the peril of parochialism, of formalism, of literalism, all of which breed various levels of idolatry. We are all journeying toward the promised land, toward the heavenly Jerusalem. God has revealed His will through the lives and teachings of our great spirits, but we cannot always reach the depths of our heritage, and the blunting effect of human finitude makes it mandatory that every heritage remain open to growth, to continued stimulation for the sake of further unfolding. God's gifts are always meant to be shared and religious witness is the means by which we share the choicest of His gifts. But in seeking to share His gifts to us we must beware against mocking the gifts that He has given to others. The effort of any religion to supersede another by pretending that it is the sole custodian of the means of salvation is a form of religious particularism which is to be transcended as we grow toward true universality.

The conception of religious witness as here defined is reminiscent of Abraham's way of witnessing to his faith. The Rabbis suggest that Abraham used the tamarisk tree which he had planted in Beer-Sheba (Gen. 21:33) as a kind of oasis-hostel to which he welcomed wayfarers. "After they had eaten he said to them, Offer praise. They asked, What shall we say? He replied to them: Praised be the God of the Universe of whose bounty we have partaken" (Genesis *Rabbah* 54:8). He did not establish a particular cult. He sought to cultivate sensitivity to the universal God who is the source of that bounty by which all life is sustained.

This conception of religious witness was invoked by Rabbi Elijah Benamozegh of Venice, when the young French Catholic seminarian, Aimé Pallière turned to him with the plea to convert him to Judaism. Rabbi Benamozegh urged him to remain within the Church, but to shed its particularism, such as the belief in the divinity of Jesus, and to follow the seven Noahide laws as the principles of a universal faith which was open to all people. Pallière's remarkable odyssey of faith is recounted in his *Unknown Sanctuary* (tr. Louise Waterman Wise [New York: Bloch Pub. Co., 1928]). The formula by which he was taught to reconcile a formal allegiance to his native Catholicism with the universal vision of Judaism is well expressed in these words:

The entire human race is thus united in a very real spiritual oneness even though there seem to be, because of the very nature of things, numerous and necessary differences. This does not deter the believer who lays claim to the prophetic tradition, from hastening, through his prayers, the coming of the day when God will be One and His name One. . . . It signifies that the one God is really worshipped under many forms, in very different cults, but in the messianic era, the spiritual world will see unity of worship realized.

Thus the believing Israelite attains through prophetism unto the loftiest divine Revelation in the past, and through Messianism, to the greatest religious hope in the future. His faith makes him a citizen of the world, and



his hope of the Kingdom of God comforts him in the sorrows and shadows of the present, by making it possible for him to glimpse a complete manifestation of the eternal truth that is to come (pp. 237f).

The Jewish hope, as seen from this perspective, does not call for the disappearance of diverse forms of religious expression, but it calls for the recognition that transcending all these diversities is the common reverence for a universal God in whom all life finds its harmonious co-existence.

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# Anti-Semitism — A Jewish Question

BEREL LANG

THE OLD JOKE WHICH PROMISES TO RELATE the elephant and the Jewish Question is worth remembering if not repeating. The inclination of writers or speakers to attach the most distant issues to items in their own history is hardly an exclusively Jewish tradition, but it would be misleading to deny either the practice itself or the reach of Jewish history. This makes it more notable, then, that anti-Semitism, which has been such a coercive factor in Jewish history, should be viewed as not part of the "Jewish Question" at all, but as an issue which, since it could only have been defined by non-Jews, remains quite fully *their* question: to answer, as well as to answer for. The reasonable, indeed urgent, concern to understand anti-Semitism—its origins and causes, its forms of expression—has, *for once*, nothing to do with the Jews. This view, furthermore, is symptomatic neither of indifference nor of naivete; it has served as a premise in the most serious historical attempts to analyze the phenomenon of anti-Semitism—in standard works, for example, by Poliakov and Parkes and, hardly less noticeably, in the general Jewish histories by such figures as Graetz, Dubnow, and Baron.

The impulse behind this conscious indifference is not surprising. Anti-Semitism as a prejudice, a distortion of reality—it would be claimed—is a problem for those who assert or are persuaded by it; *they* have created the issue, not the people who are its objects. What have the Jews to do with the libels of Luther or Chamberlain or Rosenberg? Surely the affront of living in the world with those statements has been large enough to excuse the Jews from addressing a charge which seems finally to claim that they themselves played a role in shaping the statements.

The reasons why anti-Semitism has been thus viewed by Jews are superficially persuasive. One is that the source of anti-Semitism is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, while it might be important (given this premise) to understand how the eye of the anti-Semite *came to be* distorted, it could only distort the issue itself to extend the search for explanation to sources in the Jew or in his history which in some peculiar sense "correspond" to the accusations.

Another is that even to conceive the issue in this form is misleading; since, if we ask about the Jew what it is *in him* that has drawn the fire of the anti-Semite, this, unconscionably, suggests a shared responsibility—that he had himself contributed to the fire. At the very least, to put the issue in this form is to validate the idiom of the anti-Semite who so emphatically

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contends that the sources of anti-Semitism are found not in him but in the Jew—that it is the *objective* features and events of the Jew or Jewish history: genetic inferiority, deicide, economic acquisitiveness, which originally occasioned and continue to justify the doctrines of anti-Semitism. Perhaps the anti-Semite cannot be prevented from identifying anti-Semitism as a Jewish question, but why, it may well be asked, should that strategy be otherwise endorsed?

Two additional considerations have undoubtedly figured in the reluctance to raise the issue to which these comments are pointed. One of these concerns the general problem of “racial” characteristics. Anti-Semitism has been a peculiarly virulent, but hardly the exclusive, expression of racism; all of those expressions have turned on a structure of racial stereotyping which is scientifically suspect if not quite incoherent. Even in the accounts which have acknowledged race to be a theoretical construct rather than a natural distinction, applications of the concept have bred confusion. How, then, could a corrective program be justified which moves in the same direction?

Lastly, it might be objected that even if one granted the theoretical relevance of the issue raised here, it has little practical warrant. Surely, the *key* to anti-Semitism resides in the forms of its origins and expression—not in the objects against which it is turned. Those forms themselves are difficult to explicate; the history is complex. What practical purpose would be served by encumbering the central issue?

This resistance to the possibility of a connection between anti-Semitism and Jewish history is understandable, but it has also been pernicious. Consideration of that possibility is, in fact, crucial to a grasp of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism; its avoidance has, in fact, persistently distorted the analysis of anti-Semitism as a general occurrence and has skewed the accounts of even such specific, ponderable expressions of anti-Semitism as the Holocaust itself.

Each of the reactions cited above is, in its way, reasonable; all have been acted on or at least written on, and they have consistently affected analyses of anti-Semitism. But this does not mean that they are justified, and their defects can be made evident. First, the matter of responsibility. To ask what serves as the *occasion* of an action is hardly to pass judgment on where responsibility for the action lies. Undoubtedly, some such occasions are *also* responsible for the consequences which follow. It might be argued, for example, that for a person who kills in self-defense, the initial occasion (the attack) implies responsibility for the events which follow and, thus, that the person who defended himself has none. But, for other “occasions,” this turns out not to be the case. Sir Edmund Hillary attributed his Everest climb to the fact that “it was there,” and Willie Sutton, the folk-hero Brooklyn bank-robber, when asked why he robbed banks, answered that, after all, that was where the money was. We would not say that Everest or the banks were *responsible* for the actions directed towards

them, although it is obvious that if they had *not* been what they were—Everest with its height, the banks with their money—the actions would not have occurred.

Nor does it follow—the point, once made, is obvious—that because the anti-Semite purports to be objective in his judgments of what the Jews “are” and is mistaken in those judgments or the conclusions that he draws from them, we should refuse to analyze those claims, considering the possibility that underlying them are elements of fact that are undoubtedly different from those which he claims to have discovered and yet are related to them. Certainly, if such a connection exists—and we cannot know whether it does or not until we look and see—we would, by locating it, have learned more about the phenomenon of anti-Semitism than we do by limiting our attention only to the words or actions of the anti-Semite himself. It is the difference between identifying the symptoms of an illness and determining its cause.

To be sure, one possible conclusion from such analysis would leave the matter approximately in the same condition as before. There is the possibility that, in reviewing the history of anti-Semitism, we find that the Jew has been an “accidental” object—that, for every occurrence of anti-Semitism, the onus placed on the Jew by the anti-Semite could as readily have been placed on somebody else or perhaps on no one at all; that there was *nothing* decisive about the role of the Jew in his historical context, whether religious, economic, psychological, which affected that selection; thus, that the anti-Semite’s choice of the Jew as an object (and, so, the phenomenon of anti-Semitism) was arbitrary or accidental. This is a conclusion to which the examination of anti-Semitism *might* lead, and certain accounts (for example, Sartre’s in *The Anti-Semite and The Jew* where the Jew is represented as the object of a free-floating “bad faith”) seem finally to come down to this.

It may be, furthermore, as has sometimes been claimed, that historical explanation by its nature can never lead to the determination of specific causal origins; this, if true generally, would hold also for the complex occurrence of anti-Semitism. But, certainly, we have a sense that historical accounts have sometimes advanced farther than this; and certainly, even allowing for the inertia of historical movements—a fact which might then suggest that anti-Semitism has become a convenient (because ready-at-hand) vehicle for expression which *in its origins* is arbitrary—the *prima facie* evidence points in a different direction. How can it be that each expression of anti-Semitism, of the thousands that might be cited, ranging from the “pagan” formulations of Cicero or Juvenal to those of Church figures like Augustine or Luther and then to the more recent secular versions in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion or in the professions of Drumont or Hitler himself, are only that: individual, quite unrelated either to each other or to their objects?

Again, this remains a possibility: the fact that “anti-Semitism” has

retrospectively (the term, after all, gained currency only in the late 19th century) named a series of statements and events does not imply that those expressions share anything more than just that; their harsh consequences may be the *only* factor that they have in common. But this one possibility suggests two others: at an opposite extreme, that each of the many expressions of anti-Semitism has reflected a specific feature of Jewish history; or, that a pattern is evident which includes a number of features correlated in Jewish history to a grouping of formulations in the history of anti-Semitism.

In order for either of the last two alternatives to be taken seriously, the objections that have been mentioned must be met beforehand. It would be foolhardy, of course, to deny the obscurity of the concept of race or to deny that even within this general obscurity the location of the Jew is especially problematic. But, if we edge away from explicit racial terminology, we meet concepts and terms of ordinary usage which serve at least some of the functions of that terminology. It has not been found implausible, by Jewish and non-Jewish writers alike, to speak of "Jewish history," "Jewish social structures," "Jewish thought." Nor has it been considered improbable, in a variety of historical studies, that particular traits of the Jews as a group should be claimed to have emerged. There are, for example, such recent efforts as Van den Haag's to provide a socio-genetic account of the intellectual accomplishments of the Jews, or Talmon's discussion of the religious sources and consequences of Jewish anomie (whether these succeed or not is a separate matter). If anything at all might be expected from such attempts, we require no other basis to justify the search for a connection between expressions of anti-Semitism and features of Jewish history or thought: whether the connection be in the economic structure of the community, religious or other ideological doctrine, social practice or—the simplest of all possible accounts—the fact that the Jews have attempted to survive as a people. (This last possibility might not seem to explain very much—but would be important if only as it implied the exclusion of *other* factors.)

There is, furthermore, one final and also decisive reason why, on logical grounds, the question of what it is in the Jew that has marked the occasions of anti-Semitism cannot be postponed until the character of anti-Semitism itself is identified. That is, quite simply, that this strategy begs the initial question. Whether or not there *is* a connection between elements of Jewish history and the occurrence of anti-Semitism, we cannot hope to define the latter independently of the former; that would be to assume that no such connection exists—and *whether* the connection exists is precisely the question at issue. We may well suspect that the inconclusive and often incompatible claims usually offered as explanations of anti-Semitism are due in good measure to this circular reasoning.

No surer evidence is needed of the damage caused by the failure to address the possibility that such a connection exists than what turns up in

the recent history of Holocaust studies, especially as we recall the reaction to the publication, in 1963, of Hannah Arendt's book on *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Arendt—for the first time, it seemed—raised the question of how the reaction of the European Jews to the intentions of the Nazis affected those intentions. We need not accept her conclusion that the Jews were guilty of complicity in their own destruction to recognize that the question to which she gave it as an answer is important for understanding the events of the Holocaust. The question to which I have been calling attention has a point of reference both historically and logically prior to the issue addressed by Arendt—not about the ways in which the *response* of the Jews to anti-Semitic threat or action affected them, but how the character of the Jewish community—in its various social, ideological, and religious relations—initially figured in those actions. This is too obvious and central a feature in the phenomenon of anti-Semitism to be ignored; certainly it is too important to be left to the treatment of the anti-Semites; they would like nothing better.

These comments are proposals for a method; they are bent, not towards any particular explanation of anti-Semitism, but to the form which such explanations will share. They may seem, then, to argue in a vacuum, but I have, in fact, suggested a context: the many accounts of anti-Semitism that are given by historians, psychologists, economists and philosophers, which have always assumed that there is no causal, let alone constant, connection between the general lines of Jewish history and the line which traces the incidence of anti-Semitism. It may be, of course, that the phenomenon of anti-Semitism is so complex that no adequate understanding, however circumspect the method employed, will ever be achieved even of individual occurrences, let alone of the whole. It may even be, as Plato argued, that for evil, of which anti-Semitism is an evident example, there *can be* no adequate explanation—since, if reasonable grounds had obtained, the evil, quite simply, would not have occurred. Or, on the other hand, it may turn out that the explanation, or several explanations, are there to be found. We cannot be confident of any of these possibilities, however, unless we recognize that in them all we must leave room for two figures: the one of them, the anti-Semite, the other, the Jew—and, thus, that anti-Semitism indeed is (or at least *may be*) related to the “Jewish Question.”

# Weizmann and "Weizmannism"

EVYATAR FRIESEL

THE QUESTION OF WEIZMANN'S ZIONIST-position and ideas has been a theme of discussion in Zionist circles and in Zionist literature since his rise to the leadership of the Zionist movement more than fifty years ago. Of course, no one considered Weizmann a theoretician; he was a political leader, the great statesman of Zionism in his time. He strove for political realization—but were his endeavors anchored in firm Zionist principles? Many of his followers praised his so-called pragmatism—but then, many of his opponents preferred to define it as political opportunism.

In the present essay I hope to prove two points: first, that Weizmann had a well-defined ideological position, whose development I shall try to explain; and second, that Weizmann made a decisive contribution towards the formation of a specific concept in Zionism, justly called "Weizmannism."

Historically considered, Weizmannism was the product of the amalgamation of several factors that ought to be analysed separately. One of its central components was, indeed, Weizmann's ideological position. Zionist historiography has connected Weizmann with the development of "synthetic Zionism," which, it has been said, was proclaimed by him at the 8th Zionist Congress, in 1907.<sup>1</sup> Another commonly accepted idea is that, during the first decade of the century, synthetic Zionism sought only to overcome the endless and rather sterile discussions in the movement between "political" and "practical" Zionists—between those who thought that, before all else, the Zionist movement should concentrate on obtaining a political declaration assuring Jewish rights to Palestine, and the others who thought that it should concentrate on practical work in Palestine, so as to develop a basis for the political rights to be obtained subsequently. Seen that way, synthetic Zionism would have been more in the nature of a tactical step, aimed at solving, or at least moderating, the acerbity of the internal discussions in the movement.

A closer analysis of the synthetic position shows that it was more, that it represented a new ideological development in Zionism. The Zionist historian, Adolph Boehm, who himself took a prominent part in the evolution of the synthetic approach, stated that it denied the idea that the Zionists were only one party among others in Judaism. Synthetic Zionism

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1. A. Boehm, *Die Zionistische Bewegung* (Tel Aviv, 1935), Vol. I, pp. 380-86.

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aspired to the leadership of the whole of Jewry, he explained, since it should be considered the only position in modern Judaism whose program was the renaissance of the whole Jewish nation.<sup>2</sup> Synthetic Zionism also represented a step toward overcoming the Palestinocentric character of the original debate between political and practical Zionists, and was indirectly influenced by the discussions at the Helsinki Conference of the Russian Zionist movement in 1905, when it was decided to include activity in the Diaspora (the so-called *Gegenwartsarbeit*) in the program of Russian Zionism and, consequently, in the Zionist program in general.<sup>3</sup>

Synthetic Zionism, then, was ready to accept different shades of Zionist thought, not because of a tendency to compromise, or because it was a more general and less defined approach, but, on the contrary, because it was total and all-embracing. Considering Zionism as not only a party in Judaism, but as the most vital position in Jewish life, striving towards Jewish renaissance in Palestine but also accepting responsibility for Jewish existence in the Diaspora, synthetic Zionists acted from a position of strength, not of weakness. It was not—it could not be—opportunistic, but, in confrontation with a given reality, it had the inner force to choose the approach that was most useful and promising at that moment. In this sense, the synthetic position was also essentially political. Even more, due to the total character of its aims and the variety of its possible means, it should be seen as the most political of Zionist positions during a specific period of Zionist history.

To return to Weizmann: he certainly identified himself with the synthetic position in Zionism, and it is a fact that he spoke about it at the 8th Zionist Congress, but it would be an exaggeration to present him as the initiator of the idea. The very assertion that synthetic Zionism was born at that Zionist Congress (or at any other Congress, for that matter) is unconvincing. Synthetic Zionism should be understood as a position which developed gradually. Protocols of the 8th Congress show that Weizmann was not the only one to speak about it; other representatives mentioned it before he did, and in even clearer terms than his. Furthermore, to describe Weizmann, or anybody else, as only a synthetic Zionist would give too vague an idea about his Zionist position. It is necessary to locate him ideologically among the various trends that developed, interlocked and even competed under the large umbrella of the synthetic approach before World War I.

There were several phases in Weizmann's Zionist evolution. During the years 1901-1903 he had been one of the leaders of the Zionist Democratic *Fraktion*, which was critical of different aspects of Herzl's political-centered Zionist position; it favored, instead, the organization of parties in the Zionist movement and stressed the prime importance of cultural

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2. Ibid., p. 494.

3. E. Friesel, *The Zionist Policy after the Balfour Declaration, 1917-1922*, chap. I (in Hebrew, due to appear).

education in Zionism. This emphasis on Jewish culture reflected the fact that many of the members of the *Fraktion*—and among them Weizmann—were followers of, or had been influenced by, the ideas of Aḥad Ha'am, one of the major figures of classic Zionist ideology. Aḥad Ha'am maintained that the regeneration of the Jewish spirit—encumbered by generations of life in Galut and misled by modern pseudo-Emancipation—was an indispensable condition for the national renaissance of the Jewish people. Aḥad Ha'am had been consistently critical regarding Herzl's diplomatic and political projects, which he considered not only unfounded but, what was worse, dangerous, since they tended to obscure where the real national movement of the Jewish people should start—from within—and would squander away on fantasy the few spiritual resources still left to the Jewish people. "The salvation of Israel" would arrive through "prophets," not through "diplomats," he commented bitterly, after participating in the 1st Zionist Congress.<sup>5</sup>

The Democratic *Fraktion* had a short span of life, but in 1902-03 Weizmann became deeply interested in the formation of a Jewish University<sup>6</sup>—again a reflection of his nearness to Cultural Zionism. The plan was short-lived, but it would arise again in later years. Altogether, it seems clear that during this period of his life (the so-called Swiss period), the cultural tendency should be seen as a major emphasis in Weizmann's Zionism.

He was absent from the Helsinki Conference of the Russian Zionists in 1905. Since 1904 he had been living in England, teaching chemistry at Manchester University and working hard to establish his scientific and academic position. The fact that he did not participate in the long Helsinki discussions which brought Russian Zionists to change their position regarding Diaspora work is apparently recognisable in his Zionist approach during that period. The line of Zionist action which he advocated in 1906-1907 remained totally Palestinocentric. As far as it developed, it was in a different direction; now his interest in Palestine emphasized practical and economic work there. At different Zionist conferences, both in England and in Europe, Weizmann presented ideas and projects aimed at fostering the development of the Jewish settlement in Palestine and said very little about his former cultural plans.<sup>7</sup>

In 1908, Aḥad Ha'am settled in London, and the old relationship between him and Weizmann was resumed and now grew in intensity. The natural vitality of a more mature Weizmann led him not only to absorb Aḥad Ha'am's ideas, but, also, to influence him in turn. As a matter of fact, there were also deep differences between the two men, many of them

4. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Vol. I (1885-1902)*, (London, 1968), Introduction, pp. 22-26.

5. Aḥad Ha'am, *Al Parashat D'rahim*, (Berlin, 1921), Vol. III, p. 56.

6. Weizmann, *Letters, Vol. II (1902-1903)* (London, 1970), Introduction.

7. See Weizmann, *Letters, Vols. IV, V (1905-1913)* (Jerusalem, 1973, 1974) Introduction; Friesel, *Op. cit.*, chap. I.

personal. Weizmann was of a much more practical, much more optimistic temperament than Aḥad Ha'am, who had a somber view of life and man and was utterly uninterested in social trends. He felt that only the regeneration of the Jewish spirit, suffocating under its own bonds or drowning in alien waters, would bring about the survival of the nation. Weizmann did not disagree with Aḥad Ha'am as to the ultimate aims of Zionism, but believed that the way to them could be political, or practical, or linked to cultural activity—both in order to take advantage of what circumstances made convenient and possible, and because these aims were important aspects of life. And if Weizmann's ideological position remained near to his friend's conception, Aḥad Ha'am himself, the spiritual Zionist par excellence, would, in later years, due to Weizmann's influence, participate in all of the major political steps of the Zionists working in London towards the Balfour Declaration.

During the years before World War I, Weizmann awoke again to the importance of the cultural and spiritual element in the realization of Zionism. In 1913-1914 his principal area of Zionist activity had been his effort to found a Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At the 11th Zionist Congress, in 1913, he spoke about the importance of this task: the University, he said, would be the guardian of the most important treasures of the future of the nation, a place for the development of the living Hebrew language, a central point of Jewish cultural and scientific creation, a cultural center.

World War I opened a new phase in Weizmann's Zionist life. Suddenly, the political opportunity for Zionism loomed on the horizon and Weizmann concentrated his efforts in this new direction, playing a central role in the attainment of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Soon, however, the Zionists were to discover that the Balfour Declaration, more than an end in itself, represented only a beginning: now they had to translate into political facts the very general promise contained in the Declaration. In July 1920, at the London Zionist Conference, Weizmann was elected President of the World Zionist Organization. Politically speaking, it was a very tense period for the Zionists: after the Great War, the world was still in a situation of turmoil and political flux, and the opportunity for Zionism still remained open. On the other hand, many obstacles began to appear. It took several years until the Mandate on Palestine was approved; the Arab question began to arise; and, internally, Zionist leadership underwent several crises, the most serious being the so-called "Brandeis-Weizmann struggle" in 1921.

Weizmann led the movement throughout this period of possibilities and dangers. Now in his forties, he was already mature both in the political and in the ideological sense. Within the large framework of synthetic Zionism he had undergone several changes and developments, and he had arrived at an inner equilibrium among the different tendencies. He revealed himself a master of political Zionism, but, basically, his

position retained a clear spiritual character in the tradition of Aḥad Ha'am. At the 1920 London Zionist Conference, Weizmann and Brandeis found themselves at odds over many questions, from Zionist tactics to conceptions about what Zionism should be in the supposedly new era that was starting with the nomination of Herbert Samuel to be British High Commissioner in Palestine.<sup>8</sup> The struggle brought Weizmann again to express his Zionist beliefs in terms that were as mature as they were unequivocal. In a letter to Samuel, dated August 1920, he wrote:

The leaders of American Zionism are not nationalist Jews. To them Zionism is not a movement which gives them a definite viewpoint of the world, which gives them a definite outlook on Jewish life. Zionism is to them largely a movement which tends towards the building up of a country with which they themselves have not much in common but which they are ready to accept, because it makes an appeal to the Jewish masses of which they know nothing. . . . They have further not the slightest understanding for all those questions in Zionism which have contributed so much towards the real life of the movement, like the Hebrew Revival, like the desire of the Zionists to "Judaize" the Jewish communities of the world, to make [sic] their consciousness, to fight assimilation with all its manifestations, [in] short for all those imponderabilia which form a national movement of which Palestine and Palestinism is merely the territorial aspect of a national-political upheaval.<sup>9</sup>

We may wonder whether, or how much, Brandeis and his followers deserved so severe an attack. For more than fifteen years a specific Zionist conception had been developing in the American movement, unknown to the European-centered leadership of the World Zionist Organization. Now, at the London Conference, two different Zionist concepts clashed. Without entering into a detailed comparison between his Zionist line and Brandeis', Weizmann's own Zionist credo was well summed up in the letter to Samuel.

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As mentioned before, Weizmannism should be understood as a specific ideological and political conception of Zionism that developed from the time of World War I and onward; Weizmann's personal Zionist beliefs represent one of its central ingredients. But Weizmannism had two other components of major importance, one in the sphere of the external relations of Zionism, the other related to Zionist internal policy. The first reflected a certain understanding of the political relationship between Great Britain and Zionism. The second bespoke an approach towards the internal differences in the Zionist movement and towards the relations between Zionism and Jewry in general. In the definition of both elements

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8. Friesel, *Op. cit.*, chap. VI.

9. Weizmann Archives, Rehovot, Israel.

and in their transformation into active factors, Weizmann played a central role.

There were historical roots to the mutual interest between England and Zionism. There was no other European country in which Palestine and a Jewish restoration there aroused so much attention. Originally, it had been an interest of predominantly religious character, but in the changing spiritual atmosphere of Europe during the nineteenth century, it gradually acquired secular and political dimensions as well.<sup>10</sup> Secularly expressed, British interest in Zionism had the power to fire the imagination of intellectuals and statesmen. Marc Sykes, one of the architects of British policy in the Middle East, wrote to Sokolow in 1918, when the latter's book on Zionism was about to be published:

Your cause has about it an enduring quality which mocks at time . . . When all the temporal things this world holds are as dead and forgotten as the curled and scented Kings of Babylon who dragged your forefathers into captivity, there will still be Jews, and so long as there are Jews there must be Zionism.

And he concluded:

If the peace which is to follow the War is to be a real peace, and not a pause in war, then you and your people must be watchers no longer. In Zionism lies your people's opportunity. In alliance with those other forces of regeneration and illumination which are centered on Jerusalem and which radiate through the world, it may be that you and your successors will play a part in establishing a moral order which will enable mankind to combine universal material progress with mutual subjection and charity.<sup>11</sup>

On the Jewish side, the British interest was clearly felt. Events like the angry reaction of British public opinion to the persecutions of Jews in Russia during the 80s and 90s had excited high hopes among East European Jews. The exploits of British adventurers like Laurence Oliphant were hailed in the East European Jewish press in terms that were as complimentary as they were unreal. The Zionists had nurtured hopes regarding England since quite an early stage, and the El-Arish negotiations, as well as the Uganda episode, had shown that the only political steps of the Zionist movement which had some practical sense had been connected with Britain.<sup>12</sup> There was a general feeling among Zionists that Britain would eventually help to concretize Zionist aspirations. Young Weizmann's observation, ". . . but England will nevertheless have mercy upon us,"<sup>13</sup> may be seen as typical of the existing trend of opinion among East European Jews.

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10. N. Sokolow, *History of Zionism, 1600-1918*, 2 vols. (London, 1919); F. Kobler, *The Vision Was There—A History of the British Movement for the Restoration of the Jews in Palestine* (London, 1956).

11. Sokolow, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. xxxvii-xxxviii.

12. R. G. Weisbord, *African Zion* (Philadelphia, 1968).

13. In a letter to Sh. T. Sokolovsky, Summer, 1885. *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 37.

During World War I there was an opportunity to translate this mutual interest between Great Britain and Zionism into terms of reality. Like all true political opportunities, it had a firm *real-politik* basis. First, British Prime Minister Lloyd George wanted to curtail French influence in the Middle East and to free Britain from the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement. This Agreement contemplated an even division of major portions of the Asian part of the Ottoman Empire among the Allies, but primarily between England and France, with an area corresponding to the central part of Palestine to be internationalized. Lloyd George, considering Britain's interests and building upon the fact that the brunt of the war effort in the Middle East had been carried almost exclusively by the British, now sought ways to diminish France's share in the spoils of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. One possibility was to facilitate the creation of a Britain-oriented Jewish National Home in Palestine. Another argument for a pro-Zionist declaration was the strengthening of the Allied Powers' position among the Jewish masses. With the war going on and with sacrifices and losses very heavy, British political leaders considered it important to secure the support of Jewish public opinion in Russia and in the United States. In those circumstances, Bible-educated and Palestine-oriented people like Balfour, Lloyd George, Smuts, Milner, Scott, Sykes, and others were open to a form of reasoning that would combine the politically convenient with the spiritually desirable. The result was the Balfour Declaration.

Weizmann's role in the making of the Balfour Declaration has been the object of different evaluations,<sup>14</sup> but, as it happens, it is easier to agree about what Weizmann did *not* do towards the materialization of the Declaration. He certainly did not create the mutual interest between England and Zionism. Neither could he have produced the circumstances that, at a given time in 1916-1917, generated the conditions pointing towards its possibility. But he was able to recognize the germinating opportunity, and, with his considerable intellectual powers, he threw himself into the effort to bring about its concretization. He was not alone in this task, but his political work had a catalytic effect in crystallizing a positive British policy regarding Zionist aspirations in Palestine, and that seems to have been of prime importance. Weizmann's work was interestingly described by young Felix Frankfurter, who visited London in 1919. In a letter to his older mentor, Justice Louis D. Brandeis, he wrote:

. . . Weizmann is one of the significant figures in English public life. He has a sway over English public men and over English permanent officials who will continue to govern England when Lloyd George and Balfour will be no more—such as no other Jew in England or on the continent has or can easily

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14. The standard work on the theme remains L. Stein's *The Balfour Declaration* (London, 1961); see also M. Vereté, "The Balfour Declaration and Its Makers," *Middle Eastern Studies*, 6 (1970): 48-76. While Stein stresses Weizmann's central role in the making of the Declaration, Vereté considers it only circumstantial.

acquire. His service has been a very deep one—not merely the political work of arousing the English to an understanding of their own interests but in educating the English mind to a felt understanding of what Zionism means.<sup>15</sup>

The idea of a partnership between the Zionist movement and Britain regarding Palestine was to arouse much criticism in later years, both on the English and on the Zionist side. But its reality cannot be denied. For better or for worse, it was under the political umbrella of the British trusteeship that the Jewish National Home developed.

The third component of Weizmannism was expressed in his efforts, as well as those of other Zionist leaders, to work out the largest possible consensus among groups and parties in Zionism and between the Zionist movement and Jewry, in general, in order to strengthen the basis for Zionist activity and to broaden the array of Jewish forces ready to work for the realization of the Jewish National Home.

Awareness of the need for this consensus arose rather late—only after World War I, when the Zionist leadership began preparing the movement for the realization of the Balfour Declaration. It soon became apparent that, besides all of the external difficulties relating to the British and the Arabs, the Zionists themselves were far from being of one mind about how to realize Zionism in Palestine. The search for the workable consensus within the movement and between the Zionists and other Jewish groups soon revealed itself as one of the major tasks of internal Zionist life, and Weizmann was to apply his best endeavors in that direction.

For Weizmann, as well as for other Zionist leaders of his generation, the search for the consensus reflected a deep consciousness of the cultural and spiritual diversity of modern Jewry, scattered in different countries, speaking diverse languages, educated in the values and traditions of the lands of Dispersion and exhibiting different mentalities. The creation of a working, common denominator revealed itself as one of the most vital, albeit most difficult, internal problems of the Zionist movement.

Weizmann's search for this common denominator, inside and outside the movement, culminated in the creation of the enlarged Jewish Agency in 1929. It was the product of more than nine years of effort; since 1920 Weizmann had been working in that direction, trying different possibilities and combinations. It represented a political task of immense arduousness, of unending struggles with the different Zionist factions who were opposed to it, and exhausting negotiations with the prospective Jewish partners, the certainty of the difficulties always throwing a long shadow over the frequently dubious rewards. Circumstances made the achievements of the enlarged Jewish Agency fall short of the initial hopes, but its very formation had been a most impressive manifestation of common Jewish will and of Weizmannism.

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15. March 3, 1919 (Brandeis Papers, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem).



The three characteristics of Weizmann's Zionism—his ideological position, his approach to the collaboration between Zionism and Britain, and his drive towards the Zionist and Zionist-Jewish consensus—may add to the understanding of his rise to Zionist leadership after the Balfour Declaration. To be sure, there were other personalities fitted for the first position in the movement. Brandeis, for instance, was certainly one of the most imposing figures to arise in Zionism and in Jewry in our century; Jabotinsky had far-sweeping political vision and great courage; Sir Herbert Samuel possessed a most distinguished political position in Britain; Sokolow emerged after World War I as one of the important leaders of East European Jewry. Each of these men excelled Weizmann in some particular field of Zionist or Jewish or public endeavor—but none combined all of Weizmann's characteristics, let alone manifested them on the same level of intensity and brilliance.

Taken together, these characteristics produced the political conception aptly called "Weizmannism." Weizmannism, then, had ideological, political and social dimensions; it combined total Zionism, collaboration with Britain, and awareness of the social and spiritual situation of modern Jewry.

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Between Weizmann and Weizmannism there developed the curious situation that so often characterizes the relationship between political or ideological concepts and their creators: once born, Weizmannism had a life and a logic of its own, and situations occurred where Weizmann himself did *not* act as Weizmannism would have dictated, or when his political behavior was not attuned to it. Furthermore, both Weizmann and Weizmannism developed points of strength and of weakness which were not always identical.

One of the problematic components of Weizmannism was the question of the relationship between Great Britain and the Zionist movement. The concept of Britain helping the Zionists in the building up of a National Home in Palestine presupposed a measure of imperial will and capacity that was clearly at odds with British political realities after World War I. In spite of the fact that Britain emerged from that war as one of the victors, its mood and tendency were now directed towards the diminution of its imperial aspirations and responsibilities. Weizmann tried hard to explain the relationship between Britain and Zionism in *real-politik* terms, stressing the identity of interests on both sides in the Middle East, but it was an argument that never really took hold. Historically considered, from 1919 to 1948, Britain's attitude towards Zionism was one of slow but consistent retreat from its positive intentions or, at best, of compromises regarding the Zionist movement.

Weizmann recognized this process, and worked hard to retard it. His efforts contributed to keeping British pledges alive until the Jewish com-

munity in Palestine was ready to take its political destiny into its own hands. His success in this endeavor should be considered a huge political achievement, perhaps the crowning political success in his public life, but, in terms of Weizmannism, the aspect of dependence on Great Britain did nothing to strengthen it as a political concept.

On the other hand, a significant flaw in Weizmann's political leadership was his tendency to act with, or through, "notables," whether Jewish or non-Jewish. In most of the major steps of his political life we find Weizmann trying to solve problems or to attain goals through collaboration with major figures in public or political life, more than with, or through, the rank and file of the Zionist movement. For instance, the plan to establish a Hebrew University in 1913 -1914 was built upon the assistance of Baron Edmond de Rothschild; the work for the Balfour Declaration was based on a rapprochement with a group of British political leaders; the idea for a solution of the Arab problem in Palestine, in 1918-1919, was dependent upon an understanding with Prince Feisal; the formation of the Jewish Agency in 1929 was the result of a collaboration with Louis Marshall. This working with "notables" was Weizmann's personal political style, not Weizmannism; on the contrary, it was quite divergent from it.

It may seem strange that Weizmann, whose political leadership claimed to represent the yearnings of the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe, who himself was so typically Jewish and was known and admired by Jews everywhere—that Weizmann kept rather aloof, *politically speaking*, from the Jewish masses and showed no inclination to participate in, or at least to influence, their public life. He spoke about Zionist work in the Jewish communities of the Diaspora, but he almost never practiced it. For instance, it was ten years after the Balfour Declaration before he visited important Jewish and Zionist centers in Eastern Europe.

Several possibilities exist to explain this weakness in Weizmann's political attitude. Perhaps it reflected the fact that he had not participated in the evolution of East European Zionism towards activity in the Diaspora. Certainly it does not mean that he was uninterested in, or unresponsive to, the situation of the Jewish masses, or that he was "undemocratic." But it certainly does mean that he was not a democrat in the political sense, in the sense that the statesman who builds his political strength on the support of the masses never forgets the importance of their support and always strives to fortify it. In this respect Weizmann was clearly different from Zionist leaders like Jabotinsky or Ben-Gurion, who, in their personal traits or roots were perhaps less "popular," or less Jewish, or even less democratic than Weizmann, but were political democrats, in the sense that they knew very well the importance of grass-roots support and, therefore, cultivated it.

This characteristic of Weizmann's personal political style, clearly in opposition to the inner sense of synthetic Zionism, clearly out of tune with

the conception of Weizmannism, did nothing to strengthen his direct political position in Jewish communities and Zionist centers anywhere.

There are further examples of the complex interplay between the man and the political conception connected with his name, when we consider Weizmann's activity during the 20s and the 30s. Weizmann's moment of real political power as head of the Zionist movement came early—too early, perhaps. In a sense, he was at his zenith at the 12th Zionist Congress in 1921. From then on, from Zionist Congress to Zionist Congress, we witness the gradual erosion of his political position until, at the 17th Congress in 1931, Weizmann was no longer able to command a majority of the votes and he was not reelected President of the Zionist Organization. It is true that he was chosen once more in 1935, but his position never again was what it had been during the 20s. New political forces, organized in Zionist parties of the left, the right, the center, and the religious-oriented, had grown up in the Zionist movement.

The irony of Weizmann's defeat by the Zionist parties was that they all accepted and preached the total Zionism that was so central an ingredient of Weizmannism. It represented the ideological rock on which they had built, each party adding its own vision about the future of Palestine and its society, or its own ideas about the political means for achieving the Zionist ends. The strengthening of the parties in Zionism gradually made Weizmannism obsolete as an independent political line. Weizmann himself did not want to identify with one of the Zionist parties, or perhaps he was unable to do so. Consequently, as the rank and file of the movement affiliated according to the different political possibilities, Weizmann's power basis waned. He certainly remained the towering figure of Zionism, but his position as head of the World Zionist Organization became more and more dependent upon the support of the parties. It may be said that, in a certain sense, Weizmannism remained active, but Weizmann as a political leader was defeated.

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Since political concepts are never perfect, and political men even less so, one wonders if the weaknesses of Weizmann should not be seen as the inevitable price that had to be paid for the great successes that he achieved: one, the deep understanding of modern Jewish realities that made him create important expressions of Zionist and Zionist-Jewish unity and collaboration; two, the political intuition that made him able to sense Zionism's moment of germination during World War I; and last but not least, the inner power and moral strength which, in spite of the doubts of his followers, made him capable of giving the decisive thrust which transformed historical tendencies into actual political facts, and then, of exploiting to the utmost, during long and difficult years, the great historical opportunity that had been born in November 1917.

# *Jeremiah's Epistle to the Exiles and The Field in Anathoth*

NAPHTALI J. RUBINGER

CONTEMPORARY ENDEAVORS TO DEFINE A viable and legitimate balance of power between the State of Israel and the Diaspora are not a novel phenomenon, but are rooted in the multi-historical experiences of the Jewish people. Whenever centers of Jewish life were established beyond the borders of the homeland, a rivalry often developed among them. While centrality, at least in the broad spectrum of redemption and the "end of days," was always assigned to the Land of Israel, various Diasporan communities sought to establish their own spiritual autonomy as a legitimate norm of their relationship to the National Home. Examples of this tension can be noted in the sensitive relationship between the religious authorities in Jerusalem and Egyptian Jewry, especially in the matter of the temple of Onias in Leontopolis<sup>1</sup> and in the more critical struggle for religious hegemony between the Palestinian Patriarchate and the Babylonian Exilarchate following the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E.<sup>2</sup> The dichotomy may have surfaced at an even earlier period in Jewish history. When some Judean exiles in Babylon refused to "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land" (Psalms 137:4), they may well have been stating a nationalistic protest against accepting communal normalcy in an alien land.

Yet, there were other voices which affirmed the possibility, and even compelling necessity, of establishing a sanctuary for a religious and national life beyond, and away from, a political, autonomous Judean Commonwealth. That was the message of the prophet, Jeremiah, who, during the tragic and final years of Judean independence, preached the need for a creative Diaspora in Babylon, even if only for a limited time. In this study we shall seek to detail this effort on the part of Jeremiah as seen in an interesting land transaction that he was involved in during the closing chapters of his heroic ministry.

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1. For a more detailed account concerning the temple in Leontopolis, as well as the nature of the Jewish settlement in Elephantine, the reader is referred to Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. S. Applebaum (New York: Atheneum, 1970), pp. 269, 296, 275-281, 392-349; also Salo W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), Vol. I, pp. 129, 133, 219, 344.

2. For additional information on this controversy see Baron, *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 198, 205, 403. Also Baron, *The Jewish Community* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1948), Vol. I, pp. 68-69, 149-150, 192; Vol. III, p. 24.

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The Book of Jeremiah records two instances that deal with the acquisition of property. In his Epistle to the Exiles in Babylon, Jeremiah offers this advice: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel unto the captivity whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon. Build ye houses and dwell in them and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them" (29: 4, 5). At a later date, the prophet is involved in a land transaction, at which time he exercises the right of redemption (Leviticus 25:25) and purchases a field in his native city of Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel: "And I bought the field that was in Anathoth of Hanamel my uncle's son and weighed him the money even seventeen shekels of silver" (32:9).

On the surface there does not appear to be any relationship between Jeremiah's instructions to the exiles and his own land ventures in Anathoth. If at all, one might note an element of inconsistency in the prophet's actions. His advice to the Jews in Babylon that they resign themselves to a protracted captivity and, therefore, channel their energies to secure for themselves a normal productive life in their current domicile was based upon the conviction that not only was the exile to be long, but that the Kingdom was about to be destroyed and laid waste. Nevertheless, Jeremiah himself consented to purchase a parcel of land in Anathoth, albeit with reservations (32:25).

On closer examination, however, one can discover not only a contextual relation between Jeremiah's letter and his own transaction in Anathoth but, also, an illuminating glimpse into the political, social and psychological conditions against whose background these two seemingly unrelated circumstances take on a meaningful nexus.

To appreciate the dangerous challenges that Judean independence faced at that time one must see the plight of this minuscule national entity against the background of the emerging Chaldean power that strove to establish its political and military dominance in the ancient Middle East. Nabopolassar, the founder of the Neo-Babylonian kingdom, joined with Kyaxares of Media in a successful attack on the Assyrian empire that culminated in the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C.E.<sup>3</sup>

The collapse of the Assyrian empire had great religious and political consequences for the Kingdom of Judah. Under the leadership of King Josiah, it undertook a cultic reformation to rid the country of idolatry, to centralize the worship in Jerusalem, and to strengthen the priesthood there. But, in the wake of the Babylonian victory, the kingdom was also propelled into a very delicate and precarious dilemma where it had to choose between political subjugation to the fast-growing power of the Chaldeans and an ever-enticing Egyptian policy of resistance to the encroaching might of the enemy from the north. Its history was marked by a series of alternate and indecisive commitments of loyalty to Babylon or to

3. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, abridged edition, trans. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 409.

being a rebellious ally of a crafty and designing Egyptian foreign policy.<sup>4</sup>

After the tragic death of Josiah during the battle of Meggido, when Judah sought to stave off an Egyptian advance through her territory, King Jehoiachim finally rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. While Jehoiachim died during the war, his successor, Jehoiachin, was ultimately defeated by the Babylonians and Jerusalem suffered its first exile in 597 B.C.E. Nebuchadnezzar then placed Zedekiah on the throne of Judah. Zedekiah, a man of weak moral resolution and ambivalent political disposition, fell prey to the same contagion for national independence which, despite warnings from Jeremiah and his own interludes of hesitancy, led to the final disaster of 586 B.C.E., when Babylon put an end to Judean independence, destroyed the Temple, and exiled a very significant element of the population.<sup>5</sup>

The starting point for this succession of events had been the extraordinary gathering of emissaries from Moab, Tyre and Sidon for a meeting in Jerusalem with King Zedekiah to plot a rebellion against Babylon (Jer. 27:3).<sup>6</sup> Whether this proposed alliance was initiated by Jerusalem or by her neighbors is not clear, but its impending implementation gripped the capital of Judah in a fever of conspiracy and crisis.<sup>7</sup> The ascension of Psammetichus II as the Pharaoh of Egypt (594-588 B.C.E.) also stirred the hopes of the anti-Babylonian party in Judah.<sup>8</sup>

The passion and excitement of a possible military thrust against Babylon could not be contained within the environs of the city of Jerusalem, but spilled over into Babylon, where the exiled Judeans greeted the news with high hopes for a speedy restoration.<sup>9</sup> To the nationalists, the exile was an insufferable condition. These "mourners of Zion" experienced such an insupportable anguish of estrangement that they could not "sing the Lord's song in a foreign land." Their loyalty to Zion was reflected in two ways. One was their insoluble bond with, and affection for, the land (Psalm 137:5, 6).<sup>10</sup> The second was manifest in the hatred that they bore for their captors.

O daughter of Babylon thou art to be destroyed.  
Happy shall he be that repayeth thee as thou has served us.  
Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones  
against the rock (Psalm 137:8, 9).

4. Ibid., pp. 409-410.

5. Ibid., pp. 410-412.

6. Theodore H. Robinson, *A History of Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1932), p. 411.

7. Y. Kaufmann (*Op. cit.*, p. 411) suggests that it was Zedekiah who initiated the anti-Babylonian alliance.

8. Ibid., p. 410.

9. Kaufmann notes: "Jeremiah's letter to the Babylonian exiles reveals that they were impatiently awaiting their return home. Both their own prophets as well as those in Jerusalem predicted an exile of short duration. The exiles did not cease feeling themselves part of Jerusalem; the fate of Jerusalem was the vital question for them as well, for if Jerusalem fell what future had they?" (Ibid., p. 427).

10. See also Samuel Daiches, *Jews in Babylonia in the Times of Ezra and Nehemiah According to Babylonian Inscriptions* (London: Jews College, 1910).

Reports of a possible political and military eruption against the king of Babylon fired up the national aspirations of a significant segment of the exilic community. Was there not now the possibility that soon the holy vessels would be returned to the Temple (Jer. 27:16; 28:3) and King Jeconiah restored to the throne of David (Jer.28:4)? So bewitched were the people and the priests by this hope of an imminent restoration that Jeremiah felt obligated to warn them of its dangerous and illusory nature.

And I also sent to the priest and to all the people saying: Thus saith the Lord: Harken not unto the words of your prophets that prophecy unto you saying: Behold the vessels of the Lord's house shall now shortly be brought back from Babylon, for they prophecy a lie unto you (27:16).

It was in response to this storm of rebellion that was gaining momentum not only in Jerusalem but among the Jews in Babylon, that Jeremiah wrote his Epistle to the Exiles. He agonized over a twofold impending disaster, convinced that any alliance against Nebuchadnezzar would fail and, thereby, forever seal the fate of the Kingdom of Judah. Furthermore, obsessed by a conviction that the survival of any semblance of national entity in Judah was impossible and that Jerusalem would suffer the same fate as Samaria, he was anxious to preserve the spiritual integrity, the communal stability and the physical well-being of the remnant in Babylon. In his dark hour of despair, when the certitudes of doom and destruction engulfed his soul, the prophet-priest of Anathoth looked to the Diaspora in Babylon for a religious renaissance and national rebirth. The optimistic vision concerning the future of the exilic community was born of Jeremiah's profound conviction about the inherent superiority of the Judean center in Babylon. With artistic and literary dexterity, he compares the communities to two baskets of figs, one good and one deficient (24:1-4).

. . . And the word of the Lord came unto me saying: Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: Like these good figs so will I regard the captives of Judah whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for good . . . As for the bad figs which cannot be eaten they are so bad . . . so will I make Zedekiah the King of Judah and the residue of Jerusalem. (24:6, 8)<sup>11</sup>

Aroused by the tragic consequences that loomed on the horizon—consequences spawned out of international intrigue and irrational hopes of redemption—Jeremiah was determined to do what he could to safeguard the survival of Babylonian Jewry. There were obviously among the exiles men of a more pacific nature who did not share the zealotry and

11. Kaufmann notes: "To the exiles Jeremiah speaks with two tongues. Drawing, on the one hand, upon the imaginary description of the book, he foresees decimation of the exiles by sword, famine and pestilence. . . . The advice given by Jeremiah in his letter to the exiles lays the foundation of a radically different kind of exile." *Op. cit.*, pp. 423-24. Cf. Robinson, *Op. cit.*, p. 436.



aggressiveness of many of their brethren. In keeping with his intent to calm the tensions among the exiles, Jeremiah exploited the occasion when Zedekiah sent a delegation to the government of Babylon by dispatching a letter to the leaders of the Diaspora.

The prophet's Epistle contains three elements of communal concern: a counsel to the exiles to accept the inevitability of a prolonged stay, a rebuke to the prophets for misleading the people with false promises and a consolatory message of an ultimate redemption in God's own time.<sup>12</sup> The essential burden, however, of Jeremiah's message concerned itself with pacifying any urgencies for an anti-Babylonian insurrection that would endanger the Judean center in the Diaspora. The prophetic anxieties are evidenced in the plea:

Take ye wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands that they may bear sons and daughters and multiply ye there and be not diminished. *And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away; and pray unto the Lord for it, for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace* (italics added) (29:6, 7).

Contrary to Jeremiah's hopes, however, the reaction to his Epistle was not one of patient hope and a realistic assessment of their condition, but one of shock and anger, as evidenced in a communique from Shemiah the Nechlamite in Babylon, to Zephaniah the priest in Jerusalem:

The Lord had made thee priest instead of Jehoiada the priest that there should be officers in the house of the Lord for every man that is mad and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldst put him in the stocks and collar. Now therefore why hast thou not rebuked Jeremiah of Anathoth who maketh himself a prophet to you; for as much as he sent unto us in Babylon saying: The captivity is long, build ye houses and dwell in them and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them (29:26-28).

Apparently, what disturbed the exiles was not only Jeremiah's suggestion that their stay would be long, but his counsel that they build houses and plant gardens. In Babylon, where renting a home was far more usual than building one, his advice strongly suggested a condition of permanence.<sup>13</sup>

12. John Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion—Studies in the Life of Jeremiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 287-289. While taking note of the fact that the essential burden of the Epistle was "to allay a dangerous revolutionary agitation which had sprung up among the exiles in sympathy with a project of rebellion which was being formulated in Jerusalem," Skinner nevertheless seeks to inject a theological basis for Jeremiah's letter. "The second (purpose) is an assurance that God is near to the devout Israelite in Babylon as in Jerusalem, that they still have a share in His gracious purpose and that at all times they have access to Him through prayer." It is unlikely that Jeremiah had this in mind at all, since his letter was inspired by the political and communal realities of the times. The problem of prayer and prophecy on foreign soil was no longer a theological issue at this juncture in Israel's religious development. Cf. George Adam Smith, *Jeremiah—The Man, The Book, The Prophet* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), p. 241.

13. Kaufmann, *Op. cit.*, p. 109.

The bewilderment of the exilic community is understandable. The hope for a speedy return to the homeland must have been engendered by calculations apart from any military conspiracy that was germinating in Jerusalem. Even those who looked askance at any overt action against their Babylonian captors may well have expected an end to their captivity after a firm and reassuring relationship had been achieved between Jerusalem and Babylon. After all, the nation, however depopulated, was still intact and a king did sit upon the throne of David. The Temple in Jerusalem still functioned as the religious center for the people and Nebuchadnezzar evinced no intention of putting an end to the political entity of the Kingdom of Judah. Was there not, then, ample hope that once the Babylonian government could be assured of the stability and military pacification of Judah that Nebuchadnezzar would permit the Judean exiles to return to their homeland?

Jeremiah's letter probably scraped other raw nerves among some of the Jews in Babylon. The exilic community represented the upper social and economic strata of Judean society which, before the deportation, constituted the landed aristocracy of the nation (2 Kings 24:12-16; Jer. 24:1). Indeed, these were the very ones who, unquestionably, had left behind their own "houses" and "gardens" when they were forcibly deported to Babylon. The prophet's Epistle from Jerusalem not only defused their nationalistic ambitions, but also placed in doubt any hopes they might have entertained for the restoration of their former estates. Aside from national or religious sentiment, Jeremiah's policy was seen as undermining their economic ties with the Judean community.

An illuminating utterance in the Book of Ezekiel might well explain the concern of the exiles for their properties in Judah:

Son of man, as for thy brethren . . . concerning whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said: They have gone far from the Lord: unto us is this land given for a possession. Therefore say: Thus saith the Lord God: Although I have removed them far off among the countries, yet I have been a little sanctuary where they are come. Therefore say: Thus saith the Lord God: I will even gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel . . . Then I spoke unto them of the captivity all the things that the Lord had shown me (Ezekiel 11:15-17, 25).

Ezekiel's words, obviously delivered in the interim period between the "exile of Jechonia" and the final disaster of 586 B.C.E., suggest that there was an attempt by some elements in Jerusalem to take possession of properties left behind by those carried off to Babylon. It is certainly not unreasonable to assume that news of this matter filtered back to Babylon, adding to the anxiety of the former inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah.<sup>14</sup>

14. Vs. 25 indicates that this message was intended primarily for the exiles to assure them that their estates in Judah were secure.

Alerted by Shemaiah's rebuke to Zephaniah, Jeremiah sensed the dilemma and concern that his letter produced for his brethren in Babylon. He well understood that his words not only destroyed their illusion of a speedy national restoration, but evoked a profound concern for the estates that they had left behind. Jeremiah sought a new direction for his prophetic ministry, so that he might retain his credibility among the exilic community whose survival was crucial to Jeremiah's hopes for the future of his people.

There was now a need to change the tempo of his prophecies and this new direction can be detected in the mellow and consolatory messages in chapters 30 through 33.<sup>15</sup>

Jeremiah's melody of hope reaches a rhapsodic pitch in his prophecy concerning mother Rachel.

Thus saith the Lord:

A voice of lamentation is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.

Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refuseth to be comforted  
because they are not.

Thus saith the Lord:

Refrain thy voice from weeping  
and thine eyes from tears;  
for thy work shall be rewarded,  
saith the Lord,  
and they shall come back  
from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope for thy future,  
saith the Lord,

thy children shall return to their own borders. (31:15-17).

Yet beyond this promise of an ultimate redemption with which the prophet sought to buttress the resolution and resilience of the exiles, there was a need for a more tangible surety with which to bind the destiny of the Jews in Babylon and the land they left behind. A new and more concrete testimony was needed to offset the calamitous words: "Build houses and dwell in them and plant gardens and eat the fruit of them."

This opportunity to assure the captives that their absence from the land, no matter for how long a period, could in no way cancel out their rights to the homes and gardens that they had left behind, came to Jeremiah when he was informed that his cousin Hanamel was coming to offer him the right to redeem and purchase a field in Anathoth (32:7).<sup>16</sup> Jeremiah seized the occasion to postulate his conviction that, not only was

15. Smith, (p. 180), considers chapters XXX through XXXIII as a separate book of consolation.

16. We may assume that Hanamel had no children. See A. W. Streane, *The Book of Jeremiah Together with The Lamentations*. Cambridge Bible for School and Colleges (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 77, comment to vs. 10 in chapter XXXII.

the exile of a temporary duration but, also, that the legitimate rights of inheritance and ownership would be reconstituted and respected. However the new Jerusalem might be redeemed and changed in its religious orientation, the norms of land acquisition and commerce would still be operative. He agreed, therefore, to buy the field from his cousin (32:9).

That he became involved in this transaction for reasons other than personal gain is made evident by what must be considered the operative text of the entire narrative:

And I charged Baruch before them saying: Thus saith the Lord of hosts the God of Israel; Take these deeds, this deed of the purchase, both that which is sealed and this which is open and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: *Houses and fields and vineyards shall yet be bought in this land* (Italics added.) (32:13-15)

The language of the prophet is deliberate—houses, fields and vineyards—the very same artifacts of economic and social necessity which Jeremiah had urged upon the exiles so that they would “multiply” and not “diminish” are now set in the framework of a divine reassurance of ultimate restoration. Jeremiah sealed this conviction when he himself purchased a field in Anathoth.

It is possible that, at first, Jeremiah himself may have doubted whether the old order could, indeed, return and whether a land corrupted by sin and infidelity could be reestablished as of old. Following the ceremonial purchase of the field he uttered his own misgivings:

Now after I have delivered the deed of purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the Lord saying: Ah Lord God . . . behold the siege-mounds that are come unto the city and the city is given into the hands of the Chaldeans that fight against it because of the sword, and of the famine and of the pestilence . . . Yet Thou hast said unto me, O Lord God; Buy thee the field for money and call witnesses, whereas the city is given unto the Chaldeans (32:16, 24-25).

But more than allaying the specter of total devastation that encompassed Jerusalem, Jeremiah's purchase of property was to provide a life-line of faith and national fidelity for those exiled to Babylon:

And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof you said it is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hands of the Chaldeans. Men shall buy fields for money and subscribe the deeds and seal them and call witnesses in the land of Benjamin and in the places about Jerusalem and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the hill country, and in the cities of the Low land and in the cities of the South; for I will cause their captivity to return saith the Lord (32:43-44).

# The Human Meal

JOEL B. WOLOWELSKY

THE HALAKHAH HAS ALWAYS BEEN SENSITIVE to the thin line that man walks when he engaged in activities that are mirrored in the animal world. A substantial part of the whole system of *berakhot* is designed to keep man aware of his distinctively human status. Both animals and man eat and then eliminate wastes, for example, but only a human can appreciate that his activities are part of a greater cosmic drama and, hence, worthy of a *berakhah*.

The tradition, however, had an even greater insight into man's eating. True, only man can say a blessing before eating; but, more significantly, only man can sit down to a meal. This is not simply a tautological observation, a realization that only humans can conform to the complex rules of behavior that govern a formal dinner. It is an appreciation of the fact that only humans can develop the concerns and hopes that a formal meal is designed to express. It is no accident that, in general, the formal quality of a dinner tends to increase as the importance of the occasion rises, thus pointing to the fact that people are constantly in search of non-verbal ways to express their feelings. It is quite natural that the major ritual of Thanksgiving—the holiday of what we might call America's folk religion—is a formal dinner. What better way to express our awareness of our interdependence and common hopes and gritudes?

This observation is incorporated in the halakhah's insistence that a *seudat mizvah*—a “mizvah meal”—be part of each holiday and Sabbath observance.<sup>1</sup> Thus, for example, while Purim is, on the surface, a somewhat frivolous minor holiday, the requirement of a Purim *seudah*<sup>2</sup> is itself a subtle indication of the real significance of the day. Unlike other areas of the halakhah, says the Rambam,<sup>3</sup> the laws of Purim are destined to continue into the Messianic Era.

The days of Esther and Mordecai mark the end of an era of revelation and initiate an age of responsibility wherein each person must assume more direct accountability for his destiny.<sup>4</sup> And, insists the Rambam, a

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1. Rambam, *Hilkhot Yom Tov*, 6:16-18.

2. *Shulhan Arukh Orakh Hayyim*, 695.

3. Rambam, *Hilkhot Megillah*, 2:18.

4. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “Insights into M'gillat Esther,” unpublished address, March 14, 1973. Summarized in *Sheurei HaRav*, pp. 94ff.

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person's destiny and future life are heavily dependent on the social community that he builds about himself.<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, most natural that a specific *mizvah* of encouraging friendships—*mishloah manot*—should be tied to Purim. Significantly, the “presents” that one is obligated to send to his friends on Purim must be food. Now, one might suggest that the communal activity generated by this *mizvah* is nothing more than a sensitive “cover” to enable us to send food for their *seudah* to “economically marginal” neighbors without embarrassing them on the receipt of charity.<sup>6</sup> But the real significance of the gifts lies in their power to create bonds of friendship.<sup>7</sup> It is no wonder, then, that the *Shulhan Arukh* does not codify *mishloah manot* as a separate *mizvah* or as part of the obligation to give charity to the poor, but subsumes it under the paragraph dealing with the Purim *seudah* because the gifts express the mood of a communal meal. This insight enables us to understand the halakhic opinion that when one accepts an invitation to another's Purim meal, both the host and the guest fulfill their respective obligations in *mishloah manot* (even though the guest has apparently contributed nothing).<sup>8</sup> Receiving gifts from a friend may be a passive act, but, in the context of a full meal, there is really no possibility of getting without giving!<sup>9</sup>

The meal par excellence in the halakhic tradition is the Passover Seder.<sup>10</sup> In the observances of the holiday that celebrates the opportunity to grow in human freedom, it is quite natural that we find a meal playing a prominent role, but what is surprising is the fact that—unlike any other *seudat mizvah*—there is a specific text tied to the meal. (The *Haggadah* text is made an integral part of the meal by virtue of its following, rather than preceding, the *kiddush*.) And, just as the *Siddur* liturgy is designed to teach a person how to pray and what to pray for,<sup>11</sup> so the Seder liturgy is constructed to give us a deeper insight into how a *seudat mizvah* should be conducted.

Indeed, the opening paragraph of the ritual lays down the basic principles of the meal. The Rambam had included in his formulation of the laws of *seudat yom-tov* the requirement that

when one eats and drinks he must provide for the stranger, the orphan, the widow and other poor people. And if one locks his door and eats alone with

5. Rambam, *Hilkhot De'ot*, 6:1.

6. Ovadia Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef*, “*Hilkhot Mishloah Manot*,” 1, p. 93.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Bach to *Tur Shulhan Arukh*, *Orakh Hayyim*, 695, s.v. *Vi-im hikhlif*.

9. The other halakhic instance of sending food gifts to a neighbor is the requirement to send a “meal of condolence” to a bereaved friend. There, however, one must send a complete meal, while, on Purim, *mishloah manot* is only part of the *seudah*. In the former case, the mourner's life is fragmented and disoriented and the friend symbolically informs him that, paradoxical as it seems, with the community's help it will once again become complete. On Purim, the friend symbolically states that as long as people remain apart their respective friendships will remain incomplete.

10. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, “The Seder Meal,” unpublished lecture, March 30, 1969. Summarized in *Sheurei HaRav*, p. 91ff.

11. Abraham J. Heschel, *Man's Quest for God*, p. 27f.

his family, disregarding the poor troubled souls, then there is no *simhah* of mizvah, but simply the *simhah* of his stomach.<sup>12</sup>

This halakhah applies to every holiday meal. But, in the rush of preparing our own celebrations, it is natural to turn inward, to neglect the concerns of those who do not share our personal, daily life. That is why the Passover liturgy begins with the declaration that he who is in need should join the meal. If we cannot follow R. Huna's example of making this declaration at the beginning of every meal,<sup>13</sup> then, at the very least, we should be able to say it at Passover.

Of course, from an abstract, intellectual perspective, such a declaration is meaningless when made at the beginning of the Seder. Those who have been invited are already present, while uninvited guests can be counted on to ignore a pro-forma invitation recited quietly in the privacy of a home. The purpose, however, of the text is not to express the participant's feelings, but to force him to confront himself. When preparing for the Passover meal, one must deal with the fact that he will have to recite this formal invitation; knowing this, a person of integrity will plan accordingly when making up his guest list.

Having a concern for the less fortunate is not an outgrowth of a "social-contract" relationship among Jews throughout the world. It is a consequence of the interdependence felt by members of a covenantal community. And it is in such a community, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, that the

covenantal time experience is both retrospective, reconstructing and reliving the bygone, as well as prospective, anticipating the "about to be". . . . The *masorah* community cuts across the centuries. . . and unites those who already played their part . . . with those who have not yet been given the opportunity to appear on the covenantal stage. . . .<sup>14</sup>

This mood is reflected in the requirement that "each person must see himself as if he personally went out of Egypt." And it is more subtly seen in the fact that the tradition had decided on the wording "*ha lahma anya* [this is the bread of affliction]" rather than the "*kekha lahma anya* [this is like the bread]" found in some *haggadot*. In opening the Passover liturgy, we are asked to declare that our matzah is not simply similar to that which was eaten in Egypt, but that we can actually cut across the centuries and share with our ancestors the very same matzah that they ate. Here is an experience open only to the men of faith of the covenantal community; those who approach the Seder as detached, "objective" observers will remain outside this covenantal experience. (Thus, both the wise and wicked son ask the same question<sup>15</sup> and neither receives a straightforward answer.

12. Rambam, *Hilkhot Yom Tov*, 6:18.

13. *Ta'anit*, 20b.

14. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," *Tradition*, 7:2, p. 46f.

15. As abstract intellectual questions, there is no substantial difference between the two—



The wise son is told that, if he wants to appreciate the complete experience, he must immerse himself in the laws of Passover. By learning how Pesah is observed, we can merge our experience with that of each member of the covenantal community. The wicked son, however, is bluntly informed that, since he stands outside of the community, there is no point in giving him a lecture on the function of ritual or the nature of freedom. He is certainly not pictured as a fool, but, says the *Haggadah*, an intellectual adventure is not to be confused with a redeeming experience.)

Thus, the *Haggadah* opens with a declaration of principle about the covenantal nature of the community experience and an indication that such an experience should evoke sympathy for the less fortunate members of the sodality. But, indicates the liturgy, sympathy is not enough; one must be able to empathize with fellow participants in the human drama. Thus, the final section of the opening paragraph is "This year we are slaves; next year we will be free." If one approaches the text from a purely intellectual perspective, then the phrase makes no sense in the context of, say, a free American society. (And it was, therefore, replaced in the 1923 CCAR *Haggadah* with the declaration, "Next year at this season may the whole house of Israel be free!"<sup>16</sup>) Yet, if one approaches the *Haggadah* as a co-member of a fellowship in which each person's destiny is tied up with that of his fellow participant, then as long as some are slaves, none are free; as long as some are in *galut*, the fact that some live in Israel does not remove them from the Diaspora experience.

These three declarations open the Seder, but the final summary comes after the simple question of "What is going on here?" Academically, the *Haggadah* should end soon after it begins. What more is there to say than that we were slaves and that Passover celebrates the fact that we were freed! What could be simpler? And, indeed, this is the actual answer given in response to the four questions. But the *Haggadah* quickly adds that it is not the total answer. Even if we are smart and clever—able to research a topic and assimilate information quickly and efficiently; even if we are elderly—having heard the story many times before; even if we

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despite the "emendations" found in some haggadot that "correct" *etkhem* to read *otanu*. [It is by no means clear that *otanu*, "us," is an emendation of the original *etkhem*, "you," in the *Haggadah*. The two oldest sources of the text—*Mekhilla*, *Bo*, end, and Palestinian Talmud *Pesahim* 10:4 read *otanu*, the reading that occurs in a long catena of manuscripts and printed texts (see M. M. Kasher, *Haggadah Shelemah* [Jerusalem 5715-1955], page 22 in the Hebrew pagination). On the contrary, it may be argued that *otanu* was changed to *etkhem* in order to make the statement conform to the Biblical verse in Deuteronomy 6:20 (see Kasher, *Op. cit.*, p. 121), though it is less appropriate in the context.

(It may be added that, from the perspective of the author of this article, *otanu* would be the preferable reading, since it stresses the participation of the "wise" son in the covenantal relationship. [R.G.].)

16. Interestingly, this *Haggadah* changes the answer given to the wise son. Since, from the perspective of an intellectual recitation, ritual plays a minor role, the wise son is told, "This service is held in order to worship the Lord our God, that it may be well with us all the days of our life." The original answer and the original ending for the *ha lahma anya* have been restored in the 1974 CCAR *Haggadah*.

know the whole Torah and have nothing to learn from others; even then we are obliged to tell one another the story of our becoming free. Learning the Exodus story can theoretically be the private experience of a person alone in his library. "It could be done on the Rosh Hodesh preceding Pesah"—or at any time one wishes. But the retelling must be done as part of a community experience: "*Talmud lomar bayom hahu*"—it must be done on Passover itself, together with everyone else.

Being able to speak with others for a whole evening about our past and future destiny is the hallmark of a human meal. Only humans can elevate the basic eating experience by infusing it with *divrei Torah*, songs of praise, a review of the past and hopes and plans for the future. And these are the very content of the *Haggadah*, the formal lesson of what a human meal should be. While an average meal might take place in the context of a fellowship (and there is a special *berakhah* to acknowledge this situation<sup>17</sup>), on Passover night the halakhah insists that one should make a special effort to have this fellowship present, even for the non-eating sections of the Seder,<sup>18</sup> for it is only in the context of human fellowship that the table at which we eat together can be transformed into an altar before God.

Interestingly, the matzah symbolism which dominates at the Seder underscores the goals of the evening meal. The matzah has a dual character: it is *lehem oni*, the bread which reminds us of our slavery, and the bread of freedom which could not rise because we rushed out from slavery. The formal ritual meal opens with "*ha lahma anya*" and ends with Rabban Gamliel's observation that this very matzah has come to represent our freedom. Such is the power of a human meal; it can completely reverse our view of the world. But the formal meal of the *maggid* section is but a theory that must be actualized at the *seudah*. Thus, after noting Rabban Gamliel's description of what the matzah has become, we begin our meal by spreading *maror* on the matzah and returning it to its bitter dimension. If the lessons of the Seder have been mastered, the matzah will emerge at the end of it as *zekher lekorban Pesah*, a reminder of the sacrifice of Passover thanksgiving. And the Hallel—begun without a *berakhah* in the pro forma meal and cut short after only two paragraphs—can be sung with a full heart and complete with its traditional closing blessing.

17. *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orakh Hayyim*, 192.

18. *Tur Shulhan Arukh* and *Shulhan Arukh*, *Orakh Hayyim*, 479.

# *The Mountains and Mount Zion*

ROBERT L. COHN

BIBLICAL MAN LIVED CLOSE TO HIS LAND, the land of Israel, marvelling at its contours and contrasts, its hills and valleys, its forests and deserts. From the "travelogue" of the patriarchs, through the "atlas" of the conquest and inheritance narratives, to the "pastorale" of the prophets, geographical landforms and place names play significant roles in Biblical literature. The shape of the land shaped Israel's perceptions of the world.

The mountains, to be more specific, are an important feature of the land of Israel and are a major motif in Biblical literature. Israel's fertile land of "hills and valleys" gave rise to an entire vocabulary of mountain imagery. And imagery is the language of symbols which are the crystallizations of "collectively created patterns of meaning the individual uses to give form to experience and point to action."<sup>1</sup>

Mount Zion-Jerusalem is a seminal symbol in Biblical sacred history. In geophysical reality a rather modest height that is outflanked by the hills surrounding it, Mount Zion is acclaimed, nonetheless, as Israel's foremost *har haqqodeš*, "sacred mountain." Recently, many aspects of this "collectively created pattern of meaning" have been investigated and continuing excavations in Jerusalem are uncovering new evidence about the extent and structure of the Biblical city.<sup>2</sup> *Zionstheologie*, its origins and development, has also been the subject of extensive study.<sup>3</sup> Most recently, R. J. Clifford has explored the dependence of the Zion traditions upon those

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1. C. Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1968), p. 95.

2. See, for instance, K. Kenyon, *Digging Up Jerusalem* (New York: Praeger, 1974) for a survey of the explorations. Two volumes of essays by the Israel Exploration Society, *Judah and Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1957) and *Jerusalem Through the Ages* (1968), both in Hebrew, contain research of Israeli archaeologists. The latest excavations at the Temple Mount area are under the direction of Benjamin Mazar. See B. Mazar, *The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*, Preliminary Report of the First Season (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1969), and *The Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem near the Temple Mount*, Preliminary Report of the Second and Third Seasons, 1969-1970 (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University, 1971).

3. See G. Wanke, *Die Zionstheologie der Korachiten*, BZAW 97 (Berlin: Topelmann, 1966); H. Schmid, "Jahwe und die Kultrationen von Jerusalem," ZAW 67 (1955): 168-197; J. H. Hayes, "The Traditions of Zion's Inviolability," JBL 82 (1963): 419-426; J. Schreiner, *Sion-Jerusalem Jahwes Königssitz, Theologie des heiligen Stadt im Alten Testament* (Munich: Kosel, 1963). See also the recent challenge to some of the assumptions of *Zionstheologie* by J. J. M. Roberts, "The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition," JBL 92 (1973): 329-344.

4. R. J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1972).

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of Canaanite mountains and the appropriateness of the comparative-religion term, “cosmic mountain,” in Israel.<sup>4</sup>

In this essay I look at another contributing factor to the “pattern of meaning” that is Mount Zion, namely, the mountain motif in Biblical literature itself. The hold of the “sacred mountain” symbol on the Biblical (and post-Biblical) mind can be profitably understood against the background of the “profane” mountains. First, then, I sketch the role of the mountain in Israelite history. Next, I analyze the mountain motif according to three important foci—permanence, height, and fertility. Finally, I indicate how each focus represents a significant valence of the symbol Mount Zion, which attracts and reconfigures the mountain motif.

### I. Mountain Reality

A word about the Hebrew terms for “mountain” is in order at the outset. The most common word meaning mountain, *har*, appears 520 times in the Bible, in every book except Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Ezra.<sup>5</sup> Its only Semitic cognate is the Phoenician *hr*. The word *har* has two basic meanings: (1) a hilly or mountainous region (e.g., *har yehudah*, the hill country of Judah); (2) a specific mountain, named or unnamed. Twenty-three individual mountains have proper names. They range in height from the lofty *har lebanon* (3000 m.) and *har hermon* (2760 m.) to the tiny *har sion*, Mount Zion, which rises only 50-60 meters over the Kidron valley, although it is actually 743 meters above sea level. The second most frequent term, *gib'ah*, usually translated “hill,” appears 60 times, 39 of them in the (latter) prophets but only 12 times in the historical books. Chiefly a poetic expression, it is found 31 times in parallel with *har*. In fact, with two exceptions, *gib'ah* seems to have the same meaning as *har*. *Gib'ah* may be lower in height than *har* and *gib'ah* always refers to a single hill and never to a hilly country.

In addition, several words that appear in poetic synonymous parallelism with *har* or *gib'ah* most likely denote “mountain” on these occasions.<sup>6</sup> The Semitic cognates of *sur*, “rock,” (Aramic *tura*), *sadeh*, “field,” (Akkadian *šadu*), and *gebul*, “border,” (arabic *jebel*) are the standard words for mountains in their respective languages.<sup>7</sup> Finally, the words *bamah*, “high place,” and *marom*, “height,” are sacred as well as geographical designations. *Bamah* generally denotes the hilltop altars of pagan fertility cults (e.g. 2 Kings 23: 15), while *marom* indicates Yahweh’s heavenly or earthly dwelling place.<sup>8</sup> Of the many terms which refer to specific features of

5. The brief summary in this paragraph is adapted from A. Schwarzenbach, *Die Geographische Terminologie im Hebräischen des Alten Testaments* (Leiden: Brill, 1954), pp. 6f.

6. This suggestion was made to me by Prof. S. Talmon.

7. Passages where these words appear in parallel with *har* are Job 14:18 (*sur*); Deut. 32:13; Judgs 5:4 (*sadeh*); Ps. 78:54 (*gebul*).

8. A *bamah*, however, need not be located on a hill. The *bamah* of Topheth stood in the valley

mountains, several are analogues to features of human or animal anatomy and may be remnants of mythology or merely poetic anthropomorphism. A mountain's summit is its "head" (*roš*); a peak is a "tooth" (*šen*); a slope is a "shoulder" (*ketep*, *šekem*).<sup>9</sup> The abundance of Hebrew terminology indicates the Biblical sensitivity to nuances of "mountain," and a brief look at the role of mountains in Israelite history may help to explain this sensitivity.

From its earliest days, the Israelite settlement in Canaan was identified with the central mountain range west of the Jordan and with the trans-Jordanian highlands east of the river. Egyptian documents list Canaanite fortified city-states on the seacoast and in the Jordan and Jezreel valleys but very few in the hill country occupied by the Israelite tribes.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, a likely explanation for the rapid penetration and consolidation of Israelite tribes is that the hill country where they settled had been previously sparsely occupied.<sup>11</sup> When the tribe of Joseph complains to Joshua that its assigned territory is not large enough for it, Joshua orders the cutting down of the forests on the hills in order to make room (Josh. 17:17-18). The Canaanite cities in the plains remained after the Israelite settlement in the hills. Judah, for example, "took possession of the hill country, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the plains because they had chariots of iron" (Judges 1:19).<sup>12</sup>

The Philistine threat, which unified the tribes and spurred the creation of the monarchy, was perceived to be the encroachment of a plains people into Israel's mountain territory. The Philistines "went up

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of Ben Hinnom in Jerusalem (Jer. 7:31; 32:35). See R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2 (New York and Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1965), p. 284. See also the interesting discussion of the term *bamah* by N. Tur-Sinai, *The Language and the Book* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955), vol. 3, pp. 233-235, (Hebrew).

9. Occurrences of these terms are Gen. 8:5 (*roš*); I Sam. 14:4 (*šen*); Num. 34:11 (*Ketep*); Gen. 48:22 (*šekem*).

10. Egyptian execration texts (20-19th centuries), Amarna letters (14th century), and other inscriptions and papyri suggest that the Canaanite cities were never united but remained under Egyptian suzerainty. Jerusalem and Shechem were apparently the only sizable Canaanite settlements in the hill country, and the kings of those cities dominated wide areas of sparsely inhabited land. See Y. Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible: A Historical Geography*, trans. A. F. Rainey (London: Burns and Oates, 1967), pp. 131-164, esp. pp. 157-164.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 211-220. The traditional view expounded by the book of Joshua and largely defended by Y. Kaufmann (*Sepher Yehoshua* [Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1970], pp. 59-67) has the twelve tribes rapidly conquer the land. A second view, propounded by M. Noth (*The History of Israel*, 2nd Eng. ed. [London: A. & C. Black, 1960], pp. 68-84) sees a gradual infiltration of the land by the tribes and not a conquest at all. G. E. Mendenhall ("The Hebrew Conquest of Palestine," *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* 3 [New York: Doubleday, 1970], pp. 100-120) denies that there was either conquest or significant immigration into the land from outside of Canaan. The Hebrew tribes represented a peasant's revolt against the Canaanite city-state system and formed a sort of counter-culture in the land.

12. The later migration of the Danites northward can be explained by their inability to control the plains. "The Amorites pressed the Danites back into the hill country for they did not allow them to come down in the plain" (Judges 1:34). The theme of Judges 1 is, indeed, not "conquest" but, rather, the limits of the conquest. Nineteen Canaanite cities not taken are listed, and all but Jerusalem are in the plains. These cities are then included in the inheritances of the appropriate tribes in Josh. 15-19.

(*vaya'alu*) against Israel" (1 Sam. 7:7), while Saul says, "Let us go down (*nerdah*) after the Philistines by night" (1 Sam. 14:36). Although, until his death, Saul apparently kept the Philistines out of the hill country, it remained for David to defeat them decisively (2 Sam. 8:1). It was during David's reign that Israel first moved out of the hill country, when he conquered the Canaanite cities on the plains and made vassals of the states east of the Jordan. The hill country, thus, served as the power base from which Israel descended to conquer the plains and to unite the land for the first time into a single political and ethnic unit.<sup>13</sup>

Even after the Israelite empire was established, the old hill country identification persisted. The names of Solomon's twelve administrative districts are divided evenly between those of Canaanite cities in the plains and those of Israelite tribes in the hills (1 Kings 4:7-19),<sup>14</sup> and the continuing strategic importance of hills is reflected in Omri's purchase of the hill of Shemer for his new capital (1 Kings 16:24). Israel's neighbors also considered her a hill people, for as late as Ahab's reign the servants of the king of Syria advise him that "Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they" (1 Kings 20:23).

The agriculture of early Israel reflects this hill country land base. The phrase, "the grain, the wine, and the oil," which appears in Deuteronomic, prophetic, and post-exilic literature, encapsulates the major products of the land. Grain grows in the valleys, while vineyards and olive trees grow on the hillsides.<sup>15</sup> Herding and shepherding, also part of a hill country economy, are sometimes added to the grain, wine and oil.<sup>16</sup> The combination of agriculture and livestock is suggested by the formula, "land of milk and honey" with milk symbolizing flocks and herds and dairy products, and honey the growing of trees.<sup>17</sup> Israel's political and economic life, thus, was centered in the hill country.

13. See Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, p. 220.

14. The first name in the list is Mt. Ephraim, followed by six Canaanite cities and five tribes. If Mt. Ephraim is taken to mean the whole Ephraim-Manasseh hill country, it can be added to the names of the tribes to produce a six-six division. See Aharoni, pp. 277-280, for a full analysis of the list.

15. See, for example, Deut. 28:51; Jer. 31:12; 2 Chron. 31:5. A more complete list of products is found in Deut. 8:7-8 where the "seven species" of agriculture are mentioned. D. Baly claims, "We must therefore imagine the Israelites confined to the hilly regions where this threefold system of agriculture was possible, and never effectively extending beyond it" (*Geographical Companion to the Bible* [London: McGraw Hill, 1963], p. 73), but he neglects to mention flocks and herds which move wherever there is available grass. In fact, the phenomenon of *Weidewechsel* explains the presence of flocks from the wilderness areas of the south moving northward into the plains and hills during the hot summer. See L. Rost, "Weidewechsel und altisraelitischer Festkalender," *ZDPV* 66 (1943): 205-216. This may explain what Amos, shepherd and herdsman of Tekoa, was doing in the north in Bethel. Even today Bedouin from the Negev come north in the summer searching for grazing land. Amos Oz, in the short story, "*Navadim vesepa*," (Wanderers and Vipers) captures the poignancy of the confrontation between Bedouin and modern Israeli in such a setting (*Shishah Me saprim* [Tel Aviv: Yahdav, 1972], pp. 223-239).

16. E.g. Deut. 7:13; 18:4; 28:51; Jer. 31:12.

17. Honey (*debash*) here (e.g. Exod. 3:8; Deut. 6:3) may well be not the product of bees but



## II The Mountain Motif

With a heightened awareness of the importance of mountains in Israelite life and language, let us examine the figurative mountain motif in Biblical literature. Literary imagery does not arise in a vacuum but from the daily life experience of a culture. The security which Israel's mountains afforded, the majesty of the surrounding ranges of Edom, Moab, Gilead, Hermon and Lebanon, as well as those of Israel itself, and the fertility of its hill country are the geophysical bases for three important parameters of mountain imagery which I call, in brief, permanence, height, and fertility.

The permanence of the mountain is expressed in several contexts. The mountain figures as an element of creation, as a standard for great age, as a place of refuge, and as a victim of God's wrath. When poets reflect on the creation, structure, and grandeur of the physical world, they often think of the mountains and hills. Although the Genesis creation story makes no reference to mountains, betraying its origin in the river valley culture of Babylonia, mountains are mentioned in another creation account.

Thou didst set the earth on its foundations,  
 so that it should never be shaken.  
 Thou didst cover it with the deep as with a garment;  
 the waters stood above the mountains.  
 At thy rebuke they fled;  
 at the sound of thy thunder they took to flight.  
 The mountains rose, the valleys sank down  
 to the place which thou didst appoint for them.  
 Thou didst set a bound which they should not pass,  
 so that they might not again cover the earth<sup>18</sup> (Ps. 104:5-9).

While in Genesis all is silent and still, in this psalm the order and permanence of the cosmos emerges when the primeval waters flee in fear of God and expose a land of mountains and valleys, an apt description of the land of Israel. The mountains are the setting for the symbiotic relationship between the world of man and the world of nature.<sup>19</sup> The rivers run between the mountains (vs. 10), and upon them the fructifying rain falls (vs. 13) and the wild goats roam (vs. 18). The mountains are not seen to be

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the sweet liquid made from dates. See Aharoni, *The Land of the Bible*, p. 14.

18. Vs. 7 is ambiguous. It is not clear whether the mountains rise and the valleys sink or whether it is the water that rises and sinks around them. See E. G. Sutcliffe, "A Note on Ps. 104:8," *VT* 2 (1952): 177-179 for a summary of various views. M. Dahood argues that the mountains here refer to celestial mountains (*Psalms III:101-150*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 18 [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966], pp. 36-37).

19. For an excellent discussion of the diction and structure of Ps. 104, see M. Weiss, *The Bible and Modern Literary Theory* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1967), pp. 50-59 (Hebrew).



dangerous or dreadful; they support life. They stand firm, as a testimony to the grandeur of creation and to the power of God. It is God

who by . . . strength has established the *harim*  
 being girded with might;  
 who stills the roaring of the seas,  
 the roaring of their waves,  
 the tumult of the peoples (Ps. 65:7-8).

Because of their role “in the beginning” the mountains are a standard against which age is measured. They are eternal, or nearly so. Eliphaz taunts Job, “Are you the first man that was born, or were you made before the hills?” (Job 15:7). Only Wisdom has the audacity to claim to be older than the hills. “Before the *harim* had been shaped, before the *geba’ot*, I was brought forth” (Prov. 8:25). But God, alone, is eternal. The difficult concept of “forever” is expressed by reference to the most familiar touchstone of age, the mountains.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.  
 Before the *harim* were brought forth  
 or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,  
 from everlasting to everlasting thou art God (Ps. 90:1-2).

The permanence and majesty of the mountains doubtless inspired the use of the word “mountain” or “rock” as an epithet for God. In the “next-to-the-last” words of David we hear

The Lord lives and blessed be my rock (*sur*)  
 And exalted be my God the rock of my salvation.  
 (2 Sam. 22:47; cf. 22:32; 23:3).

A psalmist supplicates God to lead him “to the *sur* that is higher than I” (Ps. 61:2).<sup>20</sup> Another proclaims,

The Lord is my *sur*, my fortress, my deliverer;  
 My God, my *sur*, in Him I take refuge (Ps. 18:3).

Yahweh is a mountain because, like a mountain, He is a haven and protector. The mountains served as a safety-zone, a refuge for the persecuted. Israel hides from the Midianites in the “dens which are in the mountains” (Judges 6:2). When Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Lot and his family flee to the hills (Gen. 19:17). Men hide even from God’s wrath by going “into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crevices of the crags” (Isa. 2:21), but cannot avoid *God’s* punishment in that way.

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20. Dahood translates, “From it lead me to the Lofty Mountain,” reading *sur yarum* as a poetic name for God’s abode similar to that in Ps. 43:3: “Let them bring me to your holy mountain

Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,  
from there I will search out and take them (Amos 9:3).

As the mountains witness to the order and stability of God's creation, so, too, do they testify to His wrath; they shake, quake, melt and crumble. The detail with which the poets describe the fate of this most permanent part of the cosmos surely implies that *even* the mountains, however permanent and secure they may be, are as nothing before an angry God. When God appears as a "man-of-war" taking revenge against the powers of Sheol, against Israel's enemies, or against Israel itself, the mountains suffer in the resulting cosmic convulsions.<sup>21</sup> God's power is demonstrated by the reversal of the process of creation.

He rebukes the sea and makes it dry,  
He dries up all the rivers. . . .  
The mountains quake before him,  
the hills melt;  
The earth is lifted up before him,  
the world and all that dwell therein (Nahum 1:4-5).<sup>22</sup>

What more impressive way to show the power of God than to describe the ultimate fragility of even the mountains, the most stable of all of nature's elements!

Then the eternal mountains were scattered,  
the everlasting hills sank low. . . .  
The mountains saw thee and they tremble (Hab. 3:6, 10).

This cosmic imagery, found also in Canaanite poetry that describes the appearance of Baal, is used to mythologize the Exodus event.<sup>23</sup>

The sea saw it and fled;  
the Jordan was driven back,  
The mountains skipped like rams,  
the hills like young sheep (Ps. 114:3-4).

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(*har godseka*)" (*Psalms II: 51-100*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 17a [Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968], p. 85).

21 "Man of war" is the translation of *ʾiṣ milḥamah* in Exod. 15:3. S. Loewenstamm discusses the "man of war" motif in Biblical theophany in "The Trembling of Nature at the Time of a Divine Theophany," *Seventy-Seven for David*, A Collection of Biblical Research Presented to David ben Gurion on His Seventy-Seventh Birthday (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sepher, 1964), pp. 508-520, (Hebrew).

22. Cf. Ps. 97:2-5; Jer. 4:23-26.

23. A relevant Baal Text (vii, 29-35) reads:

Baal uttered his holy voice,  
Baal repeated the issue of his lips,  
(even) his holy voice; the earth quaked  
. . . . .; the rocks were dismayed  
. . . . . were perturbed; . . . .  
east (and) west the high places of the earth rocked.

(G. R. Driver, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*, Old Testament Studies III [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956], p. 101).

The opposite of permanence is thus reflected in the convulsions of the mountains when God appears.

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The second geophysical feature of the mountains, their height, is also reflected in several ways in Biblical imagery. On the one hand, the mountains reach down to the depths of the earth and up to the heights of heaven. The foundations of the hills (*mosdei harim*) tremble when God is angry (Ps. 18:8), and Jonah encounters the bottoms of the mountains (*qitsbei harim*) after his plunge into the sea (Jon. 2:7). Similarly, on one occasion, the mountain heights and the sea depths express the all-encompassing extremities of God's power.

Though they hide themselves on the top of Carmel,  
from there I will search out and take them;  
and though they hide from my sight at the bottom of the sea,  
there I will command the serpent and it shall bite them (Amos 9:3).

Yet, for the most part, there is little direct praise of the grandeur of height, nor is the height of the mountain used as a standard of comparison, as is its permanence. Perhaps because Israel lived in the hills and controlled them, their height was less impressive than it might be for a plains people always looking out to the distant and foreboding heights. In any case, height imagery, when it is used, describes not the mountains in general but the dwelling place of God alone. God dwells "in a high (*marom*) and holy place" (Isa. 57:15), on a throne "high and lifted up" (*ram venissa'*, Isa. 6:1); He, alone, is man's "high tower" (Ps. 62:3). Height, loftiness, heavenliness—these are attributes of God. The mountains as part of God's creation cannot share His attributes. To predicate the height of the mountains is to suggest that they partake of divinity or offer a direct "hot-line" to God. It could imply that worship on the mountains is particularly efficacious. In fact, it is precisely such worship that the Bible sets out to eradicate. The "high places" (*bamot*) and the fertility cults practiced "on every high hill and under every green tree" are especial targets for the satiric barbs of the prophets.<sup>24</sup>

Some of the same adjectives of height which are used positively to evoke the transcendence of God are, therefore, used negatively to ridicule the pretensions of man. On the "day of the Lord" God will take revenge

Upon every one that is proud and lofty (*ge'ah varam*)  
and upon everyone that is lifted up (*nissa'*) and high  
and upon all the cedars of Lebanon  
that are high and lifted up (*haramim vehannissa'im*)

24. See W. L. Holladay, "On Every High Hill and Under Every Green Tree," *VT* 11 (1961): 170-176 for a discussion of the phrase.

and upon all the oaks of Bashan  
 and upon all the high mountains (*heharim haramim*)  
 and upon all the lofty hills (*haggeba'ot, hannissa'ot*) (Isa. 2:12-14).

The lofty mountains and trees, the “high” objects of the real world, stand for man’s pride. They also recall the pagan fertility cults which point to Israel’s turning away from Yahweh, the true mountain. Man’s efforts at self-exaltation only serve to emphasize the radical difference between God, Who alone dwells on high, and His creation. In man, to be “high and exalted” is a sign of arrogance; God alone may claim that attribute.

Because the high mountain is a figure for man’s pride, “mountain climbing” becomes an image for the human challenge to divine authority. It is in this context that several oracles against foreign kings are best understood. The hubris of the kings of Assyria, Babylon, and Tyre is expressed by their aspirations to the height of the mountains. Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who “raised” his voice and “haughtily lifted” his eyes against God, boasts,

With my many chariots  
 I have gone up the heights of the mountains (*merom harim*)  
 on the extremities of Zaphon (Isa. 14:13).

Similarly, the king of Babylon said,

I will ascend to heaven  
 above the stars of God  
 I will set my throne on high  
 I will sit on the mount of assembly  
 on the extremities of Zaphon (Isa. 14:13).

The likely original Canaanite provenance of this oracle is not our concern here, nor is the mythological notion of the “mount of assembly,”<sup>25</sup> but what is significant is the self-motivated effort of foreign kings to challenge the authority of the God of Israel by attempting to scale heaven from the mountain. As for the king of Babylon, he is “brought down to Sheol, to the extremities of the pit” (Isa. 14:15). The Biblical fondness for “reversal” answers height with depth. The king of Babylon will be cast down, not just to earth, but from the extremities of Zaphon to the extremities of the pit. A similar fate meets the king of Tyre. In an unusual oracle Ezekiel tells how the king of Tyre had been set on the “holy mountain of God” located in “Eden, the garden of God.” He had been especially created by God and adorned with all precious stones, but this favored position resulted in pride and violence. Because he considered himself “wise as a god” (28:2,6), he, too, is cast “as a profane thing from the mountain of God”

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25. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain*, pp. 43-46.

(28:16), and he falls to the ground, “into the pit” (28:8), “in the depths of the waters” (27:34).

Not only foreign kings but, also, the foreign nation, Edom, attempts to usurp God’s power by ascending the mountains. Obadiah’s oracle on Edom predicts the downfall of this hubristic people. The actual mountainous terrain of Edom makes the epithet Mt. Esau an appropriate one and lends bite to the height metaphor that Obadiah employs.

The pride of your heart has deceived you  
 you who live in the clefts of the rock (*sela*)  
 whose dwelling is high,  
 who say in your heart,  
 “Who will bring me down to the ground?”  
 Though you soar aloft like the eagle,  
 though your nest is set among the stars,  
 from there I will bring you down, says the Lord (Obad. 3-4).

Esau, moreover, has “drunk upon God’s holy mountain” (Obad. 16), but on the day of Yahweh’s revenge, “Saviours shall go to Mt. Zion to rule Mt. Esau” (Obad. 21). The domination of Mt. Esau over Mt. Zion will be reversed and false pride will be dashed. With the help of God, little Mt. Zion is ultimately “higher” than lofty Mt. Esau.

Interestingly, these challenges to the divine are all raised by *foreign* kings and nations.<sup>26</sup> No faithful Israelite is portrayed as using the mountain as a catapult to divine prerogative; only the nations, the *goyim*, are so foolish as to imagine that they can compete with God by dwelling on the heights where, they assume, they are invulnerable. That such behavior is viewed as non-Israelite is shown in a significant variation on the theme, the tower of Babel story. Here the nations (Gen. 10:32) attempt not merely to scale the mountain but to build an artificial one, “a tower with its top in heaven” (11:4). Their aim is to make themselves a “name,” to unite against God, rather than to show obedience to Him.<sup>27</sup> Their efforts to go up are answered by God’s coming down and confusing their language. The tower, a thinly disguised ziggurat called Babel, stands unfinished, witness to the folly of the nations’ ambitions to scale heaven, folly in which Israel, at least in its “official” self-understanding, never participated.

Important Israelites do ascend mountains, but not in order to challenge God. On the contrary, the mountain is a not infrequent literary setting for addresses by people who speak God’s word. The “speech from the mountain” is not self-motivated, as in the case of the foreign kings; the Israelite speaks from the heights because his message is from God. An

26. This suggestion was made to me by Prof. S. Talmon.

27. J. Ellul discusses the theological meaning of the episode and the role of the “city” in Biblical thought in *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids: Erdmans, 1970), esp. pp. 15-23. His comments are interesting though rather far-fetched in places.

elevated position is typical of rhetorical practice in the Bible; orators speak from the heights of an acropolis or a city wall.<sup>28</sup>

In some cases, the speech is not an ordinary one, but a warning from God. From the top of Mt. Gerizim, Jotham speaks to the citizens of Shechem (Judges 9:7), and lays a curse upon them and upon their king, Abimelekh, whom they supported even though he wickedly slew all of his brothers in order to obtain the kingship for himself. Unlike his father, Gideon, who refused to be king, saying, "I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you; the Lord shall rule over you" (Judges 8:23), Abimelekh usurped God's authority and made himself king. The curse which Jotham delivers from the mountain takes effect because he has delivered God's judgment; Abimelekh and many of the men of Shechem are killed (Judges 9:49-57).

The improbability of the setting, however, suggests that the mountain speech is a literary, rather than an historical, event. From the top of Mt. Gerizim Jotham could not have been heard in the valley! There is no indication that the people followed him up the mountain, for in vs. 6 they are gathered "by the oak of the pillar at Shechem." Whatever the actual scenario (if there was one), the narrator uses the mountaintop setting to emphasize the divine authority behind Jotham's words. Abijah delivers a similar warning to "Jeroboam and all Israel" from Mt. Zemaraim (2 Chronicles 13:4-12), when he denies Jeroboam's legitimacy and promises the defeat of Israel by Judah. Swiftly his words are fulfilled, for "God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah" (13:15). Again, an actual mountaintop speech is most unlikely, but as a literary setting to stress its divine sanction and guarantee of fulfillment, the mountain is a potent location.

Not only curse but blessing, too, is delivered from the mountaintop. Balaam, the pagan prophet summoned by the Moabite king, Balak, to curse his enemy, Israel, finds that he can only "speak what the Lord puts in my mouth" (Num. 23:12). Three times Balak leads Balaam to the peak of a mountain, to Bamot-Baal, to Pisgah, and to Peor—for the curse, but, instead, Balaam proclaims blessings. Balak believes that if Balaam can *see* the enemy, he can pronounce an effective curse, and on each successive mountain he does see more of Israel. On Bamot-Baal, he sees only the "extremity of the nation" (*qetseh ha'am*, 22:41); next, on Pisgah, he sees more but not all of them (*vekullo lo' tir'eh*, 23:13); finally, he sees the whole nation "encamping tribe by tribe" (24:2).

Ironically, the sight of the people calls forth blessing rather than curse and the blessing increases as the vision of the people widens. First, Balaam merely asks, "How can I curse whom God has not cursed?" (23:8). Next, he compares Israel to a lion devouring its prey (23:24). Then he proclaims that those who bless Israel will, in turn, be blessed (24:9).

28. See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 176-177. Examples are found in Prov. 1:21; 9:3.

Finally, in a fourth and unsolicited oracle, he curses the enemies of Israel, including the Moabite king who has hired him (24:17-24). On the last mountain Balaam's eyes are "uncovered" (24:4,16) and he can really see the future of Israel. The physical height provides a perspective which calls forth spiritual sight.

\* \* \*

Fertility is the third aspect of mountain imagery. Its forested mountains and green rolling hills provided Israel with clear evidence of God's favor for the land of promise.

From thy lofty abode thou waterest the *mountains*,  
the *earth* is satisfied with the fruit of thy work.  
Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the cattle  
and plants for man to cultivate  
that he may bring forth food from the earth (Ps. 104:13-14).

The fixed pair, mountains/earth (*harim/eres*), used here and elsewhere suggests the affinity of the two terms.<sup>29</sup> Sometimes the word pair, mountains/earth, is followed by a list of the products associated with each. In Ps. 104:15, for instance, wine, oil/bread balances mountains/earth in vs. 13. In Hag. 1:11 on the other hand, the reverse pair, *eres/harim*, is followed by the reverse listing of the products—grain/wine, oil. Grain grows on the flat "land," while vineyards and olive trees cover the hillsides, but in the day of the righteous king so fertile will the land be that grain will grow on the mountaintops.

May there be an abundance of grain in the land;  
on the tops of the mountains may it wave (Ps. 72:16).<sup>30</sup>

Actually, "grain" here (*pisat bar*) refers to "flax" which was grown in Egypt, and little, if any, was raised in Israel.<sup>31</sup> Proper government, thus, bestows blessing on the land so that, like Egypt, Israel, too, will be able to raise flax.

But if fertility is a sign of God's blessing, aridity is the sign of His punishment. So close is the relationship between Israel and the land that the land suffers with, and sometimes for, Israel, by losing its fertility when God has His "day" against Israel.

With bows and arrows men will come there, for all the land will be briars and thorns; and as for all the hills which used to be hoed with a hoe, you will not

29. Cf. Hag. 1:5; Ps. 18:8; 46:3; 72:16.

30. The rabbis recognized this as hyperbole:

Our rabbis taught: "There will be a rich cornfield upon the top of the mountains." From this it was inferred that there will be a time when wheat will rise as high as a palm tree and will grow on top of the mountains (B. Ketuboth 111b.).

31. See S. Talmon, "The Gezer Calendar and the Seasonal Cycle of Ancient Canaan," *JAOS* 83 (1963): 179-182.



come there for fear of briars and thorns; but they will become a place where cattle are let loose and where sheep tread (Isa. 7:24-25).

The land and the hills are punished; without Israel to till it, the land will become desolate.

The whole land is made desolate  
Because no man lays it to heart  
Upon all the high hills in the wilderness spoilers are come;  
For the sword of the Lord devours (Jer. 12:11-12).

The people of Israel, similarly, are desolate without their land. "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" the exiles in Babylonia ask (Ps. 137:4). After the exile, Haggai understands the lack of productivity of the land and of the hills to be God's punishment for Israel's failure to rebuild the temple (1:9-11).

The mountains also serve a "scapegoat" function by absorbing curse. Following the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, David invokes a curse of drought on the mountains of Gilboa where they fell (2 Sam. 1:21). Ezekiel pictures a curse against Israel as a curse against its mountains.

Son of man, set your face toward the mountains of Israel and prophesy against them, and say: Mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains and the hills, to the ravines and the valleys: Behold I, even I, will destroy your high places (Ezek. 6:2-3).

Similarly, Ezekiel curses the nation of Edom by cursing Mt. Seir, a name for the land of Edom. A simple oracle against Edom (25:12-14) is transformed by means of the mountain metaphor into an elaborate curse on Mt. Seir (35:1-15).

The mountains share not only in Israel's tragedies, but, also, in its triumphs. Juxtaposed with the curse on Mt. Seir in Ezek. 35 is the corresponding blessing on the mountains of Israel in Ezek. 36:8-11. "But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches. . . ." The restoration is envisioned as a new creation. Several key words from Genesis 1 appear here—fruit (*peri*), multiply and be fruitful (*rebu uparu*), man and beast (*adam ubehemah*). The mountains that were cursed earlier (Ezek. 6) are now blessed, and Israel, God's flock, will enjoy good pasture on them.

I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; and there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel (Ezek. 34:14).

The wilderness and the dry land will be given "the glory of Lebanon" and "the majesty of Carmel and Sharon" (Isa. 35:2). Vineyards shall again be planted on the mountains of Samaria (Jer. 31:4), and the land will be so productive that

the mountains shall drip sweet wine,  
and all the hills will flow with it (Amos 9:13).

Amos' vision is augmented by Joel (4:18) who sees that the hills flow with milk and the stream beds of Judah with water. Even the mountains rejoice in Israel's restoration by singing praises to God (Isa. 49:13) and providing pathways from Babylon to Israel (Isa. 49:11).

The mountain motif, thus, shows the mountains to be an overwhelmingly positive feature of Israelite life and thought. They are solid and permanent; their height connotes authority; they are fertile and support life. This favorable evaluation is an important backdrop for understanding the growth of the Zion tradition in Israel. What more desirable spot than a mountain could God choose for His own earthly home?

### III Mount Zion

It is not altogether surprising, then, that Mount Zion should assume a central role in the symbolism of order in the monarchical period. Traditionally a hill people, Israel transformed its "profane" capital city into a sacred mountain. The city which David captured for strategic military and political reasons (2 Sam. 5:6-10) becomes the mountain that Yahweh chose for His dwelling place (Ps. 132:13). There is, of course, a geophysical basis for the symbol. The site on which the temple stood, although hardly a great mountain, is a hill with valleys on three sides.

Geography is perhaps a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient condition to explain the sacred mountain phenomenon. Let us glance briefly at a Canaanite sacred mountain tradition. The Canaanite god, Baal, dwells on a mountain, Mt. Zaphon, and after defeating Yamm and Mot, Baal has a temple built there to symbolize his sovereignty over the land of Canaan. Although Israel's defeat of the Canaanites is never directly portrayed as Yahweh's defeat of Baal (since Baal was a "no-god" for the official religion), this reading of David's conquests may well have played a part in the popular understanding. A Zion psalm implicitly suggests this defeat.

His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation  
is the joy of all the earth  
Mt. Zion in the extremities of Zaphon  
the city of the great king (Ps. 48:2-3).

Mt. Zion is identified here, in some sense, with Mt. Zaphon. Zion now sits atop Zaphon because Yahweh reigns over the land where Baal once held sway.<sup>32</sup>

32. See R. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 179-181.

The so-called “Jebusite theory” explains the Zion ideology as Israel’s inheritance from its Jebusite predecessors in Jerusalem, but this theory has many weaknesses, not the least of which is the fact that much of the Zion imagery seems to be connected with Baal and Zaphon while the god of Jebus was El-Elyon, not Baal.<sup>33</sup> In any case, whatever may have been “borrowed” functioned independently of its origin. The sacred mountain “takes” in Israel because the real mountain and the mountain motif were already part of its life and thought. Mt. Zion was, for the Davidic monarchy, a potent symbol capable of integrating ancient literary traditions with new imperial reality. It drew to itself the various connotations of the mountain—permanence, height, and fertility—re-formed and re-broadcast.

Let us look then, at these three connotations in their sacred mountain configuration.

As the home of the eternal God, Mt. Zion is itself eternal. In the Psalms we hear not about the historical past when David captured the city Jerusalem, but, rather, of the eternal present in which Yahweh reigns from Mt. Zion. “His abode is in Salem, his dwelling place is in Zion” (Ps. 76:2-3). The eternality of Zion symbolizes Yahweh’s protection of the faithful.

Those who trust in the Lord are like Mt. Zion  
which cannot be moved but abides forever (Ps. 125:1).

The geographical reality of Mt. Zion, a hill surrounded by other hills, gives rise to the image of Jerusalem as a secure enclave.

The mountains are round about Jerusalem.  
and the Lord is round about his people (Ps. 125:2).

Jerusalem built as a city firmly bound together (Ps. 122:3).

Ultimately, it is not the inherent nature of Zion that makes it a secure enclave but Yahweh’s dwelling in the city that does so.

There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God,  
The holiest dwelling-place of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved (Ps. 46:5-6).

The difficult Ps. 68 may reflect a rivalry between Mt. Zion and another mountain, Bashan. (Is Bashan a code name for Sinai or Gerizim?) Zion’s distinction rests in God’s choice of the mountain for His eternal home.

O mighty mountain, mountain of Bashan;  
O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!  
Why look you with envy, O many-peaked mountain,

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33. Roberts, “The Davidic Origin,” p. 334.

at the mount which God desired for his abode,  
yea, where the Lord will dwell forever? (Ps. 68:16-17).

When Yahweh appears in battle array in Zion fighting against Israel's enemies, the battle again is pictured in terms of a storm theophany with the cosmos quaking and shaking.

With thunder and with earthquake and with great noise.  
with whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a devouring fire . . . .  
All that fight against her and her stronghold and distress her,  
shall be like a dream, a vision of the night. . . (Isa. 29:6-7).

Zion, however, unlike the other mountains, does not quiver or melt in the cosmic convulsions. On the contrary, as Yahweh's residence, it is the site from which He defeats Israel's enemies.

The Lord of Hosts will come down  
To fight upon Mt. Zion and upon its hill,  
Like birds hovering, so the Lord of hosts will protect Jerusalem  
(Isa. 31:4-5).

Zion becomes Yahweh's fortress, His eternal military defense post—"Within her citadels God has shown himself a sure defense" (Ps. 48:4). Zion's towers, ramparts, and citadels are sure evidence of God's eternal protection of the city (Ps. 48:13-15). Just as Yahweh protected the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai with pillars of cloud and fire, so, too, He will preserve Jerusalem and its righteous on the day of judgment. "The Lord will create over the whole site of Mt. Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. . . ." (Isa. 4:5). Zion is, thus, a refuge for the righteous and the most permanent of the mountains.

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I noted above that the second aspect of mountain imagery, height, is emphasized only when the height is God's. Height connotes divinity and the attempts of foreign kings to scale the heights met with disastrous results. Just as the hubristic king of Babylon was cast down from God's mountain, so, too, foreign kings cannot ascend Zion. Only the chosen descendant of David reigns on Zion.

Truly it is that I have established my king  
Upon Zion, my holy mountain (Ps. 2:6).

Foreign kings flee in fright (Ps. 48:5-7). Because Mt. Zion is Yahweh's dwelling place, it becomes "beautiful in elevation" (*yepheh noph*, Ps. 48:2).

Despite the actual modest height of Zion, the poets transform it into a formidable peak, sitting on the “extremities of Zaphon,” the lofty mountain of Baal (Ps. 48:3).

The mountain is an image which the Biblical authors can use to express the paradox of a God who dwells both in heaven and on earth. Just as a tall mountain appears to bridge the gap between heaven and earth when its peak reaches up into the clouds, so, too, does God’s dwelling place. At Mt. Sinai God descends on the mountain and yet speaks from heaven (Neh. 9:13). At Mt. Zion, too, the boundary between heaven and earth is erased. Isaiah, for instance, sees “the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up (*ram venissa*) and his train filled the temple” (6:1). Yahweh’s throne reaches to heaven. “A glorious throne exalted from the beginning (*marom meri’son*) is the place of our sanctuary” (Jer. 17:12). The “footstool” is the equivalent of the holy mountain as the parallelism of Ps. 99:5,9 demonstrates.

Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his footstool (*hadom raglav*)  
for he is holy. . .  
Exalt the Lord our God and worship at his holy hill (*har qod’so*)  
for the Lord our God is holy.

David had wanted to “build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord and for the footstool of our God” (1 Chr. 28:2), and when Jerusalem was destroyed, Yahweh “remembered not his footstool” (Lam. 2:1). Like the mountain, the footstool is an apt image for a God who dwells in heaven yet has a foot in the door of royal affairs!

The delivery of God’s word of blessing or curse from the mountain-tops at the hand of His messengers is also paralleled and intensified at Zion.

The Lord bless thee out of Zion  
And see then the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life;  
And see thy children’s children.  
Peace be upon Israel (Ps. 128:5-6).

More specifically, *torah* is to come from Zion. Isaiah looks forward to the day when

the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be  
established as the highest of the mountains  
and shall be raised above the hills. . .  
For out of Zion shall go forth *torah*  
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

Zion’s new authority is symbolized by a further elevation of its height. It has become a center for *torah*, for the proclamation of God’s word. Ezekiel, too, envisions the new Jerusalem—not just the temple, but the entire city—set on a “very high mountain” (Ezek. 40:2). In Zachariah’s

apocalyptic vision, similarly, following the final battle between Yahweh and His enemies, all the land shall be leveled but Jerusalem shall be elevated (Zach. 14:10). All of these futuristic oracles show the renewed Jerusalem to be an exceptionally high mountain. Power and authority flow from height; the sacred mountain is an *axis mundi*, a link between heaven and earth.

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The third type of mountain imagery, that which connotes fertility, also finds a new locus at Mt. Zion. Although fertility is a feature of the mountains in general, it is God's presence on His own chosen mountain, Zion, that ensures the fertility of the land. Mt. Zion attracts the "dew" which falls on naturally fertile Mt. Hermon (Ps. 133:3) and distributes it to the land. From Zion

Thou hast remembered the earth, and watered her,  
greatly enriching her,  
With the river of God that is full of water.  
Thou preparest them corn, for so preparest thou her (Ps. 65:10).

Fertility imagery also is used to describe the people whom God blesses from Zion.

Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house;  
Your children will be like olive shoots around your table.  
Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.  
The Lord bless you from Zion (Ps. 128:3-5).

Mt. Zion, however, has no autonomous power. When the temple is destroyed and Yahweh leaves Zion, the land cannot produce.

Happier were the victims of the sword  
than the victims of hunger,  
who pined away, stricken  
by want of the fruits of the field (Lam. 4:9).

Even when the exile is officially ended, the returnees suffer because of the land's infertility. But Haggai explains that without a house in Jerusalem, God will not endow the land with blessing.

Because of my house that lies waste and everyone of you runs to his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is restrained from giving dew, and the earth is restrained from giving its produce (1:9-10).

The futuristic visions of Ezekiel and Zechariah stress the fertility that flows from the new Jerusalem just as they suggest its new elevation. A river will extend from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and the desert will be

fructified (Ezek. 47:7-12). Perhaps this mighty river has a realistic source in the Gihon spring below the Ophel, but the symbolic source, in any case, is the sacred mountain. The scene recalls the Garden of Eden from which rivers also flowed to fertilize the land. Zachariah speaks of a similar condition, with "living water" flowing both eastward and westward from the new Jerusalem (14:8).

### Conclusion

Mt. Zion is, thus, a sacred mountain symbol, a "collectively created pattern of meaning," the configuration of which is conditioned by Israel's own geography, literary traditions and theo-political needs. From its life in the land, Israel came to value the security of the mountains, to marvel at their dimensions and to enjoy their fertility. When the Davidic empire sought to express its new hegemony by means of a symbol current in the Syro-Canaanite world, the sacred mountain, it could rely on the positive associations with which the mountain already resonated in the Israelite mind. Religious symbols do not descend from the heavens nor do they merely drift in from other cultures. They are rooted in experience and, as Geertz says, "give form" to experience. Mountain imagery shapes the "profane" city of Jerusalem into the sacred mountain Zion. Israel's political and religious center is symbolically transformed into the mountain and city of God.

### *Correction*

At the bottom of page 469 of the Fall 1976 issue, in the article on Hermann Cohen the text should have read:

Can religion, any religion, really be regarded as an autonomous thought- or value-system, similar in stature to other intellectual disciplines, or is it not merely an adjunct to philosophy? And he had felt compelled to conclude that religion cannot be granted recognition as an independent value-system, but should be viewed as a subdivision of philosophy, particularly idealist philosophy, with its strong emphasis on ethics.



# Addendum to “The Faith of Abraham”

ROBERT GORDIS

*We regret that the following paragraphs were omitted from the conclusion of the paper of the same name which appeared in the Fall 1976 issue of JUDAISM.*

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AKEDAH narrative, even on Biblical ground, is clear and important. Abraham is truly a “knight of faith,” and his entire career testifies to this exalted trait. It is in obedience to God’s call that he leaves his home and wanders into an unknown land, buoyed by the Divine promise that he would become a great nation (Gen. 12). He remains a wanderer in the land and a stranger among its inhabitants, compelled to defend himself and his kinsmen against attack (Genesis 14), and tormented by the absence of a son through whom the Divine promise could be fulfilled. When he is assured that his own offspring will be his heir, “He trusted in the Lord and it was counted as a merit for him” (Genesis 15:6). In the awesome “covenant among the pieces,” the Divine promise is reaffirmed that after a period of exile and oppression in a foreign country, lasting four hundred years, his descendants will return and inherit the Promised Land (Genesis 15:13-21). The birth of Ishmael fulfilled the promise of a son to Abraham, but it is clear that not through him would the covenant be established. Only at an advanced age are Abraham and Sarah blessed with the birth of Isaac, “Your son, your only one whom you love” (Genesis 22:2). Now comes the supreme test of Abraham’s loyalty to God—his willingness to obey the Divine command to sacrifice this son as an offering. The Akedah is the climactic act of faith in the life of the Patriarch. In the words of the rabbis, “Abraham, our patriarch, underwent ten trials and emerged triumphantly from all in order to demonstrate how great was his love for God” (*Abot* 5:3). Abraham is being commanded to give up all that is most precious to him in the world, but he is not being asked to surrender his loyalty to the moral law. Were that the case, he would rise and protest. The abrogation of the ethical imperative God could not ask and Abraham could not grant. Later generations saw in the sacrifice of Isaac a prophecy of the future destiny of Abraham’s descendants, who would be called upon through the ages to suffer martyrdom “for the sanctification of the Divine name.” This significance the Biblical narrative continues to hold for us today, who have been the witnesses of the unspeakable horror of the Holocaust. Time and again, the Jew has felt called upon to surrender his life for God’s cause, but he has never been bidden to give up his faith in God’s law of righteousness.

# *On the Principle of Dina De-Malkhuta*

*Review-Essay by* SALAMON FABER

*Dina De-Malkhuta Dina: The Law of the State is Law.* By SHMUEL SHILO. Academic Press, Jerusalem, 1974. 511 pp. (Hebrew)

THE PRINCIPLE OF *DINA* HAS A LONG history in Jewish law. First enunciated by the Amora Samuel (173-253 C.E.), a leading authority on civil law in the post-Mishnaic period, it is cited in the Babylonian Talmud in four places: *Nedarim* 28a, *Gittin* 10b, *Bava Kama* 113a, and *Bava Batra* 54b and 55a. These are halakhic discussions of the following problems: 1. the legality of taxes imposed by the ruler of the realm, including his prerogatives to expropriate property and to sell debtors into serfdom for non-payment of those taxes; 2. the recognition of local practices concerning the presumptive ownership of real estate (*ḥazakah*); 3. the validity of local procedures in sales and transfers of real estate; 4. the prohibition against cheating duly appointed tax collectors and concealing assets from them; 5. the legitimacy of documents executed or validated in non-Jewish courts. Other discussions, which relate to the question whether, and to what extent, Jews are religiously bound to abide by legal enactments and judgments of non-Jewish authorities, are recorded in Talmud, both *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi*, some pre-dating Samuel, while others report opinions by Amoraim of later generations. Of special interest are considerations whether Jews may, or even should, apprehend fellow Jews accused of wrongdoings and deliver them to gentile authorities for punishment, e.g. *Bava Me'zia* 83b, *Niddah* 61a, *Tos. Terumot* 7:20, *Yerushalmi Terumot* 46b.

According to J. Neusner (*History of the Jews in Babylonia*, [Leiden: Brill, 1965-70], vol. 2, pp. 2-95), Samuel's pronouncement was part of a policy calculated to demonstrate Babylonian Jewry's loyalty to the Sassanide rulers who, about a generation before, had wrested power over the land from the Parthians. To be sure, such gestures, in which Judaism or some aspect of it is made to appear as favoring a given position, are known from other data of Jewish history. Whether or not political expediency was originally the sole motivation for *dina*, once it was accepted into the corpus of Jewish law, this principle became the subject of countless discussions, interpretations, reformulations and adaptations which mirror, by and large, the relationships of autonomous Jewish communities, in nearly all lands of the world, to non-Jewish governmental agents. Rabbinic literature of all types, e.g., commentaries and novellae (*hiddushim*)

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on Talmud, responsa (*she-elot u-teshuvot*), and codes abound in materials on the subject.

Dr. Shilo, applying the methodology of case study, researched these sources, analyzing relevant data with painstaking attention to background, specific application and effects upon further developments in Jewish law. From this research, organized according to chronological and geographic units, emerges a comprehensive view of Samuel's principle in its manifold ramifications. Though at times tedious, due to the mass of detail in text and notes, the work before us represents a remarkable achievement in systematization, of value to students of law, history and sociology. It is only regrettable that references were not always checked for accuracy.

Some data in the literature of *dina*, which uniquely reflect the dynamic flexibility of Jewish law, will now be singled out for more detailed attention. To begin with, the juridical basis of Samuel's statement, never discussed in the Talmud, gave rise to varied explanations. Rashi, in *Gittin* 9b, s.v. *huz*, comments that the validity of documents of gentile courts is based upon the premise that gentiles are required, according to Jewish law, to abide by the seven Noahide Laws, the maintenance of a system of civil law—*dinim*—being one of them. Other commentators and codifiers perceive the underlying reason for *dina* in one or more of the following motives: 1. the population's consensus to abide by the "king's rule"; 2. the halakhic principle of "*hefker bet din hefker*," which indirectly invests spokesmen of halakhah with authority to grant a ruler fiscal privileges; 3. the halakhically recognized validity of *minhag*, of generally accepted custom; 4. the parallelism with prerogatives of Jewish kings, as stated in I Samuel 8:11-17; 5. the idea that the land "belongs to the king," and, therefore, he may stipulate conditions for settlement thereon; 6. the generally accepted premise that organized society must be guided by basic rules in order to function effectively.

It is noteworthy that, while these various explanations were discussed by legal scholars for many ages, Rashi's line of reasoning, linking *dina* with *dinim*, was not developed further until recently (p. 82-83 of Shilo's text). Rabbi B. Zulati, in a minority opinion of the Beth Din for Appeals in Jerusalem, quotes Rashi's comment to argue that the concept of *dina* applies only to gentile authorities, whereas Jewish governmental instruments in Israel must be guided exclusively by the law of the Torah (p. 83, note 107). He obviously questions the legislative competence of a secularly oriented Knesset. Other legal experts, writers of responsa and judges of Rabbinic Courts (*dayyanim*) expressed opinions, both affirmative and negative, concerning the applicability of *dina* to a Jewish government in modern Israel as well as in ancient times. Having cited the respective references, Shilo concludes with the observation that "in view of the reality of restored Jewish statehood, it is too early to determine the attitude of Jewish law in the matter; future generations may decide."

The categories of extraneous law which were adopted by Judaism on the strength of *dina* remained, throughout the ages, substantially the same as in the Talmud. However, concerns with specific problems varied, depending upon socio-economic conditions in the affected communities. As an illustration, Jews living in German territories in the 13th century had to cope with problems of taxation by oppressive regimes. Due to the unfavorable circumstances of the times, limiting stipulations which traditionally defined the legality of taxes to the advantage of the payer had to be modified and, at times, to be altogether abrogated. This state of affairs is reflected in scores of responsa by Rabbi Meir ben Baruch (Maharam me-Rothenburg, 1220-1293). On the other hand, responsa by his contemporary in Spain, Rabbi Solomon ben Adret (Rashba, 1255-1310), where Jews enjoyed relative tranquillity, include nothing about taxes. Instead, questions pertaining to legal documents in gentile courts are among his major concerns. Spanish Jews of that period evidently preferred to use the facilities of the general community, rather than their own institutions, for such services. Religious leaders, who saw in this tendency a deplorable neglect of Jewish law, fought against it. Here, too, however, circumstances favored modification of traditional attitudes. Thus, the opinion of Nahmanides (Ramban, 1194-1270) eventually prevailed, allowing not only sales contracts, but other types of documents, except for *gittin* (divorces) and declarations of manumission, to be drawn by Jews in gentile courts. It is understood, of course, that the trustworthiness of such courts had to be beyond doubt. In the course of time and with the complex developments of Jewish life, halakhic spokesmen suggested further leniencies in relying upon confirmation of data, attestations, etc., by gentile agents, not excluding situations where ritual law was a factor, as, for example, the permission by Rabbi Moses Sopher (Hatam Sopher, 1762-1839) for an *agunah* to remarry on the basis of governmental testimony that her husband had died.

The mores and concepts prevalent in the general community influenced the interpretation of *dina*. The following examples should suffice to prove the point:

Menachem Elon points out in his introduction to *The Principles of Jewish Law* ([Jerusalem: Keter, 1975], p. 22-23), that lay tribunals functioning in medieval Italian Jewish communities, rendered decisions in matters of trade according to norms prevalent at the time in general law. Only in problems where ritual law was involved, such as marriage and divorce, inheritance, etc., were judgments determined in consonance with Jewish law.

Contractual agreements entered into by, and between, Jews according to the customs of the land were eventually recognized by halakhah as fully binding, though the rabbinically required *kinyan*—taking title—was omitted in the procedure (p. 169). This development may have resulted from rejection by many halakhic authorities of the idea

that the applicability of *dina* is justified only in matters where interests of the state or the ruler are at stake, but not in matters of a private nature (*devarim she-ben adam le-havero*). In this spirit, Rabbi Israel Isserlein (1390-1460), author of the well known halakhic compendium, *Terumat ha-Deshen*, ruled that a lost object must be returned to its owner even after his *yeush*—resigning himself to an acceptance of the loss—had become a matter of public record.

In recent years, Rabbi Joseph Henkin affirmed the halakhic legality of rent controls in New York City as justified by *dina*, though these controls discriminate in favor of one class of citizens, that is, the tenants (p. 114, note 188). This renowned scholar-*posek* maintains that, as a matter of principle, in situations where Jewish communities are not guided by their own competent law-making and juridical agencies, the state legislature fills a void, from the halakhic standpoint, and its duly enacted laws, pertaining to civil matters, are universally binding (p. 14). This opinion is in consonance with a much earlier statement of principle by Rabbi Abraham ben David (Ravad, 1120-1198) that “since *dina de-malkhuta dina*, whenever Jewish law is not definitely clear about a given issue the custom of the land should be relied upon” (p. 160, note 431). Incidentally, discussions on rent controls that are cited in this work, pp. 174-177, are uniquely interesting, inasmuch as they reflect the impact of current socio-political attitudes upon the discussants’ thinking, e.g., pro- or anti-socialist, favoring or scornful of professional politicians and the like. Apropos social politics, Rabbi Moses Sopher rejected the suggestion that closed shop contracts may be argued on the basis of *dina* (p. 185).

Most halakhists are of the opinion that *dina* includes governmental rights to exact punishments, fiscal as well as corporal. Accordingly, Jewish residents of the land are religiously obligated to cooperate in its endeavor to keep law and order. They may not shield a fellow-Jew, one suspected or accused of guilt, even from the death penalty (pp. 264-275). Rabbi Asher ben Jehiel (Rosh, 1250 -1327) is quoted, however, as having ruled against delivering a Jew for execution because he was accused of engaging in intimacies with a gentile woman (p. 271, note 358). He advised, instead, that in order to save a man’s life perjury would be permissible in this and similar cases. Unlike this stand, Rabbi Jacob Emden (Yavetz, 1697-1776) is reported as urgently arguing that a man who committed murder be not permitted by spokesmen of halakhah to save himself with perjury (p. 272, note 366). A novel approach in this matter is presented by Rabbi Shalom Mordecai Shvadron (Maharsham, 1835-1911), who questions whether a gentile government’s prerogative to impose fines and punishments, which are classed in this responsum as *kenasot*, is a priori included in the Noahide law of *dinim*, and, thus, Jews are under no obligation whatsoever to cooperate in their implementation (p. 269). If anything, this unusual argument may reflect hesitation on the part of Jewish authorities to expose fellow Jews to the dangers of legalized brutal-

ity. An incident from this reviewer's early life in his native community in Southwestern Poland is typical of the attitude: A man accused of smuggling merchandise across the border, and threatened with long term incarceration, petitioned the local Beth Din for permission to perjure himself in self-defense. Permission was granted in view of rampant anti-Jewish biases. In this connection, it may also be noted that *Tosafists* in the Middle Ages condoned evasive oaths in cases when feudal lords attempted to coerce Jewish residents not to leave their domain (p. 269).

As indicated before, *dina* enabled halakhic authorities to use expropriatory powers, which meant, at times, restricting the personal rights of individuals. Nevertheless, Rabbi Moses Sopher opposed interpreting the principle with a view to earmarking non-observant Jews, or offenders against morality, as scapegoats of the Jewish community in order to meet governmentally required quotas for military services (p. 275, note 377).

As long as Jewish jurisdictional agencies operated effectively, Jews were forbidden by their rabbis and teachers to make use of gentile courts for the adjudication of disputes, even in instances when decisions by the latter were identical with Jewish law. This position was unequivocally insisted upon throughout the Jewish world, in Sefardic as well as Ashkenazic centers. Two opinions are referred to here as typical of the halakhists' stand: Nahmanides' commentary on Exodus 21:1, and Rabbi Moses Isserles' (Rema, 1525-1572) statement in *Hoshen Mishpat* 27:2

*Dina* was never thought of as sanctioning laws or juridical decisions that betrayed distinctive anti-Jewish tendencies, or that were intended to humiliate Jews. A most recent decision of this type was written by a Beth Din in Jerusalem, according to whose *pesak-din*, the concept concerning "the law of the conqueror" did not apply to Nazi rulers. Consequently, objects plundered by them in World War II were to be returned to their rightful owners without reservations (p. 81). According to some opinions, however, taxes and levies which affect only Jews as an economic class are not in the category of humiliating acts.

Until the emergence of Reform Judaism and its ideology, Samuel's principle was not assumed to be operable in matters of ritual, the sector of Jewish law described by the term *issur ve-heter*. Yet, from time to time, problems arose where "the law of the land" could simply not be ignored as part of the issue. Inadvertently, solutions have called for new examinations and new insights, and the instances cited below indicate the remarkable resilience of Jewish law in meeting such challenges:

*Herem*—excommunication—the powerful instrument of enforcement of a community's will and decisions against an offender, usually entailed, in addition to social ostracism, drastic sanctions of a ritual nature, e.g., the denial of the honor of an *aliyah*, exclusion from the minyan and the like. However, a *herem* imposed at the insistence of gentile powers was generally considered halakhically invalid. One suspects that a healthy instinct of self-preservation might have been responsible for this attitude,

though it stands to reason that in certain situations rabbinic leaders had to react cautiously and not ignore the ruler's wishes (pp. 116-120). Incidentally, with the advent of emancipation, *herem* disappeared from Jewish life even in those communities where the Beth Din continued to function in its traditional role.

*Bekhor*—most authorities agree that a cow with its first calf, that is sold to a non-Jew, though not in strict accord with regulations of Jewish law regarding sales and transfers of property, factually belongs to its original owner and, therefore, the Biblical command of the first-born remains incumbent upon him. Only Rabbis Henkin (p. 121, note 224) and B. Uziel (p. 122, note 225) are of the opinion that this sale is effective on the basis of *dina*.

Similar reasoning applies to the problems of the sale of leaven for the week of Passover, as well as to the sale of lands for the year of *shemita* in Erez Yisrael. Apropos leaven, a *sh'tar mekhirah*—ritual sales contract—on which the legally required fiscal stamp had not been affixed, was confirmed as valid by Rabbi Moses Sopher only after Emperor Franz Joseph declared it “kosher” (p. 122, note 228)! Another curious decision holds the Jewish husband of a non-Jewish spouse ritually responsible for her leavened food on his premises during Passover (p. 124).

With regard to the laws of inheritance, halakhists throughout the ages insisted that, in this area, Jewish law must be accorded exclusive preference (pp. 138, 146, 148, 289, 295). Even Rabbi Henkin, whose lenient views concerning the scope of *dina* were alluded to before, refrains from extending its applicability to cases of *yerushah* (inheritance) (p. 130). (This entire subject is discussed by Rabbi Israel Moses Hazan [1802-1862] in *Naḥalah le-Yisrael*, [Alexandria, 1862].)

Due to limitation of space, only a fragmentary number of facts from Dr. Shilo's comprehensive work could be discussed in this essay, but these amply indicate that the thrust of Jewish law, certainly as far as the concrete application of Samuel's significant principle is concerned, has been to fulfill the imperative *ve-ḥai ba-hem*—by the pursuit of these laws man shall live (Lev. 18:5).



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**Both German and Jewish**

*Insight and Action: The Life and Work of Lion Feuchtwanger.* By LOTHAR KAHN. Rutherford, N.J. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975. 392 pp. \$15.00

*Reviewed by* SOL LIPTZIN

THE AUTHOR, a professor of modern languages at Central Connecticut State College and a frequent contributor to scholarly and Jewish publications, is best remembered for his study, *Mirrors of the Jewish Mind* (1968), in which he dealt with the dilemma of the Diaspora Jewish intellectual who was embedded in Jewish time and German or French space. In that volume, he included a chapter on Lion Feuchtwanger, the German Jew or Jewish German, who, in his best-selling historical novels, such as *Jud Suess, Josephus, Success*, combined historical erudition, psychological perceptiveness, social seriousness, and narrative talent. This chapter Kahn has now expanded into a full length, fascinating biography, in which, unlike other contemporary biographers, he devotes comparatively little space to the sex life of his hero, though not suppressing the fact that it ranged wildly from flirtatious nights to romantic entanglements of considerable duration, but, rather, devotes much more emphasis to his hero's wrestling with the Jewish heritage which came unsought and which, nevertheless, led to much suffering and to later exile from Germany.

Kahn's book, based on meticulous research, proves that the Jewish psyche that is mirrored in the historical novels was Feuchtwanger's own. Hence, these narratives of past ages and diverse lands take on a vividness and immediacy reflecting German-Jewish

reality in the first third of our century.

Feuchtwanger stemmed from a patrician Jewish family that had been rooted in Bavarian soil for at least four centuries and that was still steeped in Orthodox traditions. He revolted early against this Orthodoxy but yet he never really emancipated himself from it in his inner soul. In Heinrich Heine, who also sought escape from Jewishness but could not sever his bonds with it, even after baptism, he saw his own fate prefigured, and it was choice and not accident that led the twenty-three-year-old Feuchtwanger to write his doctoral dissertation on Heine's *Der Rabbi von Bacharach*. What attempted apostasy was for the nineteenth century poet, socialism and humanism were for the twentieth century novelist. Both were hurled back to Jewishness, both experienced calumny because of their birth, and both came to glory in their ancestry despite their awareness of the excrescences that the Galut had grafted on to it.

Feuchtwanger is depicted as alternating between scepticism and faith, Zionism and supra-nationalism, democracy and Marxism, bohemian epicureanism and ironic stoicism. These contradictory tendencies remained unresolved in his personality and were mirrored in his work. He once confessed that his head was cosmopolitan but that his heart was Jewish. His German patriotism, which reached its crest at the outbreak of the First World War, ebbed after his brief experience as a soldier. Therefore, like Stefan Zweig, he thought of himself as a Good European, if not as a Citizen of the World. Nevertheless, it was his Jewish novel about Suess Oppenheim which, in 1925, ushered in his popularity among world readers, who ultimately numbered in the tens of millions. The hero of

this novel combined the features of the original eighteenth century Court Jew and of Walter Rathenau, who was at the height of his influence as Germany's Foreign Minister when the novel was begun and who was the victim of anti-Semitic assassins when it was completed.

Feuchtwanger's second best-seller was the novel, *Success*, which appeared in 1930 and whose main character was immediately recognized as Adolph Hitler. The novelist ridiculed this demagogue, whose Munich Putsch of 1923 he had witnessed at close quarters. As a result, the author became a target for Nazi vituperation and he would undoubtedly have been incarcerated and killed had he been at his Berlin residence in 1933. Fortunately, a lecture tour abroad, that had begun in the preceding November, was still keeping him in the United States when the Nazis came to power and he never returned to Germany. Most of his lectures were before Jewish audiences, since he was much in demand at Zionist fund-raising meetings after the sensational success of his Jewish novels. He did leave America, however, in March 1933, to settle in Southern France. There he wrote his novel, *The Oppermanns*, and joined in the literary battles being waged against the Nazis by exiled writers. In this struggle, he became ever more involved with Leftist causes and ever more sympathetic to the Soviet regime which was fighting fanaticism with fanaticism and ruthlessness with ruthlessness. In 1936 he accepted an invitation to Moscow and was received by Stalin, who made a favorable impression upon him and whom he extolled in the book, *Moskau* (1937). It was not until much later that he perceived dark fissures in Stalin's personality. Because of this book, he never could shake off the reputation of being a Communist sympathizer. Mean-

while, the Nazi menace was spreading over Europe. His optimistic faith, shared by many German Jews and by most exiled intellectuals, that the Hitler episode was but a temporary aberration that would soon run its course, led him to stay on in France. When war broke out, a misguided French administration incarcerated him along with other German refugees who had found asylum there while waiting for the Nazi regime to collapse. In the first, hectic, disorganized months of war, no distinction was made among these aliens between friends and foes of Hitlerism so that when the Nazis won their quick victories, in 1940, Feuchtwanger was in danger of being seized by them and liquidated. His escape in the disguise of a woman, his flight across the Pyrenees, and his being whisked to the U.S. are the most exciting part of the biographic narrative.

It was on American soil that he completed his three-volume historical novel, *Josephus*, which he had begun thirty years earlier and which climaxed his literary career. In *Josephus*, who had broken out of Jewish nationalism nineteen centuries earlier and who strove for a cosmopolitanism that would combine the best features of Jewish thought and Roman practicality, only to return to Judea to die among his Jewish people, Feuchtwanger reflected his own craving for a world order based on idealistic socialism and his being flung back to his national, Jewish, bourgeois origins. His backsliding to Jewishness was not really a homecoming to Jewishness, but it did lead him, in 1948, to support the Irgun during the struggle for Israel's independence. However, torn between his Jewish and his Marxist loyalties, he remained silent about Soviet treatment of its Jews and drugged his conscience by minimizing the severity of Sta-

lin's anti-Jewish actions. His earlier silence during the two years of the unholy alliance between Stalin and Hitler had irritated his friends. During the post-war years they hoped that he would speak out against Marxist totalitarianism as he had spoken out against fascist totalitarianism, but he could not be budged from his faith in the Communist states as the bearers of the socialist ideal cherished by him, despite imperfections and cruelties that accompanied the straining toward this ideal. To his dying day, he remained a bourgeois-liberal-intellectual whose heart beat for the working masses, a Fellow-Traveler who admired the Soviet experiment but avoided personal involvement with the Communist Party, a scholar-artist who enjoyed life to the full and did not want to jeopardize his affluence. His biographer and admirer, with scrupulous honesty, does not gloss over his faults and weaknesses.

Feuchtwanger once confessed that he did not know whether he was a German, Jewish, or international writer. His biographer takes all three of these aspects into account when agreeing that his hero was German by language and culture, Jewish by heart and culture, and international by being both.

In choosing the title, *Insight and Action*, Kahn wants to symbolize Feuchtwanger's intellectual migration from a passive contemplation of events to a more active participation in social reform movements.

The book will long remain as the most comprehensive and best written study of a controversial figure whose star shone brightly between two World Wars and, despite its present decline, will never altogether fade from the literary horizon.

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## Letting It Happen

*The Boys From Brazil.* By IRA LEVIN  
New York. Random House, 1976.  
\$8.95.

*Reviewed by* HERBERT YOSKOWITZ

IN *The Boys from Brazil* Ira Levin, author of *Rosemary's Baby*, has written a shocking and moralistic best-seller based on the notion that cloning—the biological process whereby new individuals can be theoretically produced from a parent cell—has re-created a new race of Hitlers. The “boys” from Brazil are not boys at all but Nazi SS men in hiding, who belong to the *Kamaradenwerk*, an organization dedicated to the creation of a Fourth Reich. Leading them is Dr. Josef Mengele, the escaped—and as yet undiscovered—medical experimenter of Auschwitz.

Mengele, having genetically duplicated ninety-four clones from the preserved tissue of Hitler, attempts to have them undergo the psychological circumstances of Hitler's youth. In order successfully to duplicate the “Führer's” life, the adopted fathers of these clones, selected for their similarities to Hitler's real father, are marked for assassination at the same age at which Hitler's father died.

Will Mengele succeed in producing a crop of megalomaniacs who will plague the civilized world? Levin never gives the impression that he will. The book's hero, Nazi-hunter Yakov Liebermann, is portrayed as “too-protected” to fail. In fact, at the beginning of the book, one Nazi says that Liebermann should be assassinated, but the suggestion is curtly dismissed.

He's hunting for lecture bookings now, not for us. Forget about him. To the police and the press he's a boring old nuisance with a file cabinet full of ghosts; kill him and

you're liable to turn him into a neglected hero with living enemies still to be caught (p. 18).

Even at the book's end, when Liebermann lies bleeding from a bullet-wound inflicted by Mengele, there is little doubt that Liebermann will survive and that Mengele will perish. Indeed, Mengele dies a rather horrifying death, devoured by Doberman pinchers owned by one of the clones.

The plot aside, some serious and far-reaching issues are treated in *The Boys from Brazil*. As yet, successful cloning has not been achieved with mammals, though it has with frog cells. But how soon will it be before what is implied in Levin's fiction becomes "real-life?"

Does genetic engineering have enough professional and ethical rules to govern "evil" scientists, e.g., Mengele, so that they do not become the sole arbiters of what is done? Do we continue our continued rapid growth in science without taking stock of the risks that are involved? Levin describes the cloning "race" as similar to the contest between the Russians and the Americans to reach the moon. The English and the Americans, he says, began their "pursuit" in the cloning contest in the 1950's, but they are behind because they have not as yet begun to work with human ova, and the Russians are outdistancing us.

Certainly genetic engineering falls into the category of sensational appeal, and Levin may be excused for doing that which is so popular. On the other hand, he is to be commended for raising the issue of the risk of tinkering with human bodies and minds that underlies the plot of *The Boys from Brazil*. While no one will go as far as a Mengele, or so we pray, as to manipulate the environments of potential tyrants by coldly murdering innocent bystanders, how far are we

willing to allow scientists to go in their manipulation of the environment? And, as we become more aware of cloning, how can we insure that what is done will be both safe and ethical?

A second major issue raised indirectly by Levin concerns our responsibility to the Holocaust. Should we, as George Steiner and others have argued, speak at all about the unspeakable? Assuming that we should speak about it—that despite the inevitable failure to penetrate now the realities of Auschwitz we must not dismiss from history what happened there—then to whom, if anyone, should we attribute the blame? Did the Jews themselves allow the Holocaust to happen? Or was it because the Christian world stood by and, by and large, did nothing? Give no serious thought to these questions, Levin implies. In his statements that "Jews didn't let it happen. Nazis made it happen," the oversimplified and dangerous view that the Holocaust was strictly a Nazi, or German, phenomenon is given credence. Yet this simply will not serve. As the notable French historian, Jules Isaac, has said: "Auschwitz would have been impossible had it not been for the poisonous lies with which the Churches have infected Christian populations, for at least 1600 years." Germany in the 30's, whatever else it may have been, was also a "Christian population."

It seems that, for Levin, only when some similar aberration, such as Nazism, re-occurs would there be the slightest chance of the Holocaust coming again. According to him, neither Jews nor Christians could have done anything to change what happened. Apparently Levin is taking up a theme left over from *Rosemary's Baby*: in the face of extreme evil, goodness is not sufficient to vanquish it. This is a negative, if not cynical, view of

man's ability to combat evil and one far removed from Judaism's approach: Behold I present before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore choose life! (Deuteronomy 30:19). In Biblical sources and in subsequent Judaic teaching, the Jewish position has consistently been one of confidence (perhaps over-confidence!) regarding the ability of good being able to reign over evil.

We are responsible not only for what we do; what we *do not* do is equally our responsibility. In that sense, Jews as well as Christians let the Holocaust happen by not teaching that the horrors of the past must not be allowed duplication or amplification. For example, in teaching the history of the Middle Ages, emphasis should be placed on the reasons for the Crusades, as well as on their effects on "disbelievers" such as Jews. Likewise, the New Testament should be taught so that the hate engendered between Jews and Christians at the beginning of the Common Era was not meant to be translated into an everlasting "truth." We all should understand, as Roy Eckardt has put it, that "Every instance of Christian antisemitism in postbiblical history is directly or indirectly related to events or reported events recorded in the New Testament." If so, one wonders what *really* were the origins of the "boys" from Brazil?

Ira Levin is wrong. It wasn't just the Nazis who made it happen, and it won't be the "Nazis" who will make it happen again, if it should happen again. It will, as usual, be all of us. And while we all share some of the guilt for what happened, we need not wallow in self-pity but, rather, should be inspired to see that it does not happen again, by "cloning" or otherwise. Twenty years ago, Malcolm Hay wrote: "... responsibility for the nearly achieved success of the German plan to destroy a whole group of

human beings ought not to be restricted to Hitler and his gangsters, or to the German people. The plan nearly succeeded because it was allowed to develop without interference."

In 1976, plans to glorify Hitler were a leading campaign issue in an Austrian town. The deputy mayor of Leonding, Austria, wanted to convert Adolf Hitler's boyhood home from a funeral parlor to a museum. He claimed that 47% of the 19,000 population wanted the dictator's house preserved, only 13% wanted it torn down, and the remaining 40% voiced no opinion.

Another report gives us perhaps more cause for concern. When two members of Milwaukee's Nazi Party were brought to trial for ambushing a local Jewish leader, there was no trouble finding a jury that would not be prejudiced against Nazis. The potential jurors' ignorance of Nazi atrocities made selection easy. Many Americans had either forgotten or do not know of such an outrageous chapter in world history. Here is a cause for dismay.

The approach in *The Boys from Brazil* is a dangerous one. We must not teach that, aside from the Nazis and their supporters, the entire world was innocent in the 1930's and the 1940's. We cannot assume, as Levin does, that "... people are *better* and smarter now, not so much thinking their leaders are God" (p. 303). Evil will come to us again if Hitler is either remembered as a hero or, equally as dangerous, not remembered at all. Hitler's world must never be duplicated. In Levin's book, Mengele's attempt to do so fails. Whether or not real life will duplicate Levin's novel is something we will have to decide.

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